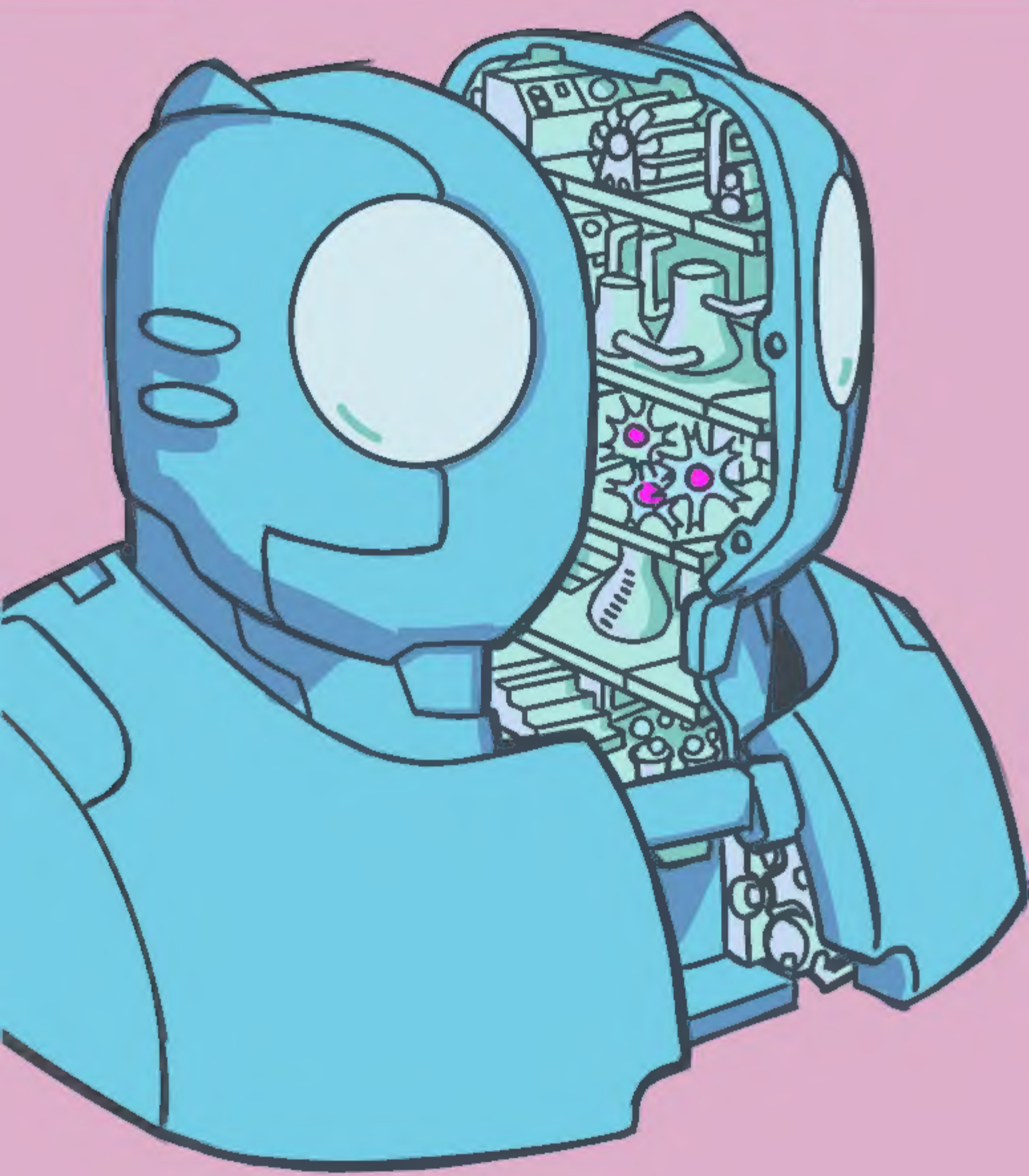
ATOMIC ROBO

THE WORLD'S GREATEST SCIENCE ADVENTURE MAGAZINE!



TESLADYNE INSTITUTE
JORNADA DEL MUERTO, NEW MEXICO

I FINISHED THE ASSIGNMENT.

GOOD. TELL ME ABOUT IT.

DESPITE STRICT FORMULAIC CONFINES OF HIS STORIES—

—WODEHOUSE PRESENTS A SURPRISING VARIETY OF INCIDENTS.

THEY **ARE** FORMULAIC, I DON'T THINK WE'RE MEANT TO WORRY **IF** JEEVES COMES BACK OR **IF** BERTIE GETS MARRIED.

I SEE. EVEN WHEN THE DESTINATION IS OBVIOUS, THE PATH TO IT IS NOT.

IS THAT NOT MUCH LIKE A PUZZLE?

NEVER THOUGHT OF IT LIKE THAT.

I'M FOND OF PUZZLES.

ME TOO.

HEY, I'VE GOT SOME BUSINESS **TOPSIDE.**

I CAN SWING BY THE **LIBRARY** ON MY WAY BACK. DID YOU PICK A HISTORICAL FIGURE YET?

I WOULD LIKE TO START WITH SIR ISAAC NEWTON.

GOOD CHOICE.

BE BACK SOON.

AND REMEMBER...

KEEP IT SECRET.

KEEP IT SAFE.

YOU SURE YOU'RE UP TO RUNNING THIS PLACE BY YOURSELF, FOLEY?

YOU'LL BE BACK BY *SUNSET.* WHAT COULD GO WRONG?

ZAK ZPAK

IT'S *SUPPOSED* TO DO THAT.

FWOOSH

ANYWAY YOU'LL BE BACK BY SUNSET.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *LIGHTS?*

COULD BE A *TEST!*

MAYBE A TEAM BUILDING EXERCISE. LIKE A *PUZZLE ROOM!*

MARGOT RAJAVI

OLIVIA MENDOZA

BEN O'MALEY

THE NEW KIDS

OR THIS PLACE ISN'T AS FINISHED AS ADVERTISED.

I MEAN, WE *WERE* WARNED ABOUT THE CONSTRUCTION.

YEAH, THERE WAS A *DELAY,* RIGHT? *PERMITS* OR SOMETHING.

I HEARD THEY HAD TO STOP EVERYTHING WHEN THE CONTRACTORS UNCOVERED A BUNCH OF OLD *COLD WAR* STUFF.

REALLY?

YEAH. *ALL* THIS USED TO BE PART OF THE WHITE SANDS MISSILE RANGE BACK IN THE DAY.

ROCKETRY. *WONDER* WEAPONS. MANHATTAN PROJECT.

AND WHO *KNOWS* WHAT ELSE.

JORNADA DEL MUERTO VOLCANO

WHOOOOSH

SIR, I'M AFRAID THIS IS A ***NO PARKING ZONE.***

*LOOKS LIKE A **VOLCANO** TO ME.*

THAT'S ***WHY*** IT'S A NO PARKING ZONE.

*YOU **SURE** YOU WANT TO DO THIS, BERNARD?*

I'M A GEOLOGIST WITH AN EXTINCT ***VOLCANO*** PRACTICALLY IN MY ***BACK-YARD.***

PLUS THE ***KNOWN*** LAVA TUBES OF JORNADA DEL MUERTO ARE UNUSUALLY LARGE. YOU COULD DRIVE A ***BUS*** THROUGH THESE THINGS.

BUT DUE TO THE INHOSPITABLE TERRAIN, NO ONE'S CHARTED THEM ***FULLY.***

SO THAT GIVES ***US*** THE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO ***MAP*** THEM.

BOOT

VWRRRT

*AND TO TEST THE LATEST IN EXOPLANET **EXPLORERS** WHILE WE'RE AT IT.*

*JUST GO **EASY** ON HER. **DAHLIA'S** NEVER BEEN OUTSIDE INSTITUTE GROUNDS.*

BUT WHAT I'M ASKING IS IF **YOU'RE** SURE YOU'RE UP TO THIS.

WE ALMOST **LOST** YOU THE LAST TIME YOU WENT UNDERGROUND.

WCHNK

HOLLOW EARTH IS SOMETHING I WILL **NEVER** FORGET. BUT IT'S **GONE.**

THE CRYSTAL CITY OF **ATVATABAR**-- SUNKEN, GLORIOUS, AND ETERNAL-- IS **LOST.**

THE MAGMA WORM IS **DEAD.**

THERE'S **NO ONE** LEFT FOR ME DOWN THERE.

"NO ONE"?

NOTHING.

NOTHING LEFT FOR ME DOWN THERE.

THIS WORK WE DO, LEAPING FROM **ONE** CRISIS TO **ANOTHER,** IT'S NOT EASY. NOT FOR **ANY** OF US.

THERE'S NO TIME IN BETWEEN TO **PROCESS** IT.

AND SECRETS JUST **PILE UP** BECAUSE THERE'S NO TIME TO TELL ANYONE WHAT'S HAPPENING BEFORE THE **NEXT** THING HITS.

YOU WERE SUFFERING AND WE DIDN'T SEE IT.

WE FAILED YOU. I FAILED YOU.

ROBO, C'MON. WE GOT THROUGH IT.

SURE, BUT YOU SHOULD'VE HAD SOME HELP.

YOU DON'T NEED TO FACE ANYTHING ALONE. IF YOU FALL DOWN AGAIN, WE WILL PICK YOU UP.

JEEZ, ROBO. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

IS THAT WHY YOU INSISTED ON A CHAPERONE?

IT'S THE OTHER WAY AROUND. YOU'RE HERE TO PICK HER UP.

YOU *WORRY* TOO MUCH.

YOU *THINK* SO, LANG?

I JUST FEEL LIKE, Y'KNOW, WHO AM *I* TO BE IN CHARGE OF A BUNCH OF *SCIENTISTS?*

THEY'RE *NOT* SCIENTISTS.

OKAY BUT THEY *WILL* BE IF, LIKE, I DON'T *SCREW* IT UP FOR THEM. THEIR WHOLE *FUTURE* IS IN MY HANDS.

THAT'S A *LOT* OF RESPONSIBILITY.

YOU'RE *ELIZABETH FOLEY.* YOU SAVED THE WORLD. FROM THAT FUNGUS *THING* OR WHATEVER.

YEAH.

YEAH. I *DID* DO--HOLD UP, *FUNGUS THING OR WHATEVER?*

YOU *STILL* HAVEN'T READ THE REPORT!

ANYWAY, YOU GOTTA REMEMBER NONE OF US ARE *EVER* READY FOR WHAT THIS JOB ASKS.

HELL, THAT *IS* THE JOB. IT'S WHAT WE *DO* ABOUT IT THAT MATTERS.

AND WE WON'T BE ON VACATION *FOREVER.* IN THE MEANTIME, YOU'VE GOT *ROBO* FOR BACK-UP.

WHEN IN *DOUBT,* JUST MAKE 'EM DO ALL THE STUFF *YOU* HATED DOING AS AN INTERN.

REMEMBER, *THEY'RE* MORE SCARED OF YOU THAN YOU ARE OF THEM.

THERE IS A CONTRADICTION.

NEWTON IS REMEMBERED AS A MAN OF SCIENCE YET IT APPEARS HIS MAGICAL WRITING FAR EXCEEDED HIS SCIENTIFIC OUTPUT.

WELL, BACK **THEN** THERE WASN'T A CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN "WIZARD" AND "SCIENTIST."

BOTH INVESTIGATED THE NATURAL WORLD THROUGH **ALCHEMY.**

ALCHEMY IS **STEEPED** IN MAGICAL THINKING, BUT ITS **PRACTICES** ARE THE **CORE** OF OUR SCIENTIFIC METHOD.

PRECISE MEASUREMENTS, **RIGOROUS** OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIMENTS WITH REPEATABLE RESULTS. THOSE **STARTED** WITH ALCHEMY.

I HAD NO IDEA.

IT GIVES SCIENCE AN ORIGIN THAT'S **UNCORRUPTED** BY THE MATERIAL WORLD IT SEEKS TO STUDY.

MR. TESLA USED TO SAY SCIENCE IS NOT AN **EXACT** SCIENCE. BUT ITS **AUTHORITY** DEPENDS UPON EVERYONE **THINKING** IT IS.

SO YOU **DON'T** TALK ABOUT HOW NEWTON INVENTED **PHYSICS** SO HE COULD PERFORM BETTER **SPELLS.**

YOU'RE NOT **MEANT** TO.

BUT WHY?

IF WE'RE **ONLY** TOLD ABOUT NEWTON THE **GENIUS** WHO INVENTED **CALCULUS,** THEN IT'S DIFFICULT TO EVEN **IMAGINE** NEWTON THE **SORCERER.**

BUT THIS ISN'T **JUST** ABOUT NEWTON. **OR** SCIENCE. IT'S ABOUT HISTORY **ITSELF.**

WE'RE THE STORIES WE'RE **ABLE** TO TELL OURSELVES. AND **HISTORY** MARKS THE BOUNDS OF WHAT WE **IMAGINE** TO BE POSSIBLE.

SOMETIMES MYTHS ARE ABOUT LITERAL GODS AND **SOMETIMES** THEY'RE A BUNCH OF FACTS ARRANGED TO OMIT **OTHER** FACTS.

EITHER WAY, IT'S **CONSTRUCTING** A STORY ABOUT THE **PAST** TO JUSTIFY THE SHAPE OF THE **PRESENT.**

OR SOMEONE'S VISION OF THE **FUTURE.**

IF ALL HISTORY IS A MYTH, THEN HOW CAN I KNOW WHAT IS TRUE?

YOU **CAN'T.** BUT YOU CAN READ A LOT OF HISTORY AND **ALWAYS** ASK YOURSELF: **WHO** BENEFITS FROM TELLING **THIS** VERSION?

IS HOMEWORK ALWAYS LIKE THIS?

NOT FOR MOST PEOPLE.

YOU'RE LUCKY.

YOU GUYS *AWAKE?*

YEAH.

NO?

IF YOU *WERE* ASLEEP, YOU WOULDN'T *SAY* NO.

YEAH, IT WAS *WISHFUL* THINKING.

TOMORROW'S THE *BIG* DAY.

I MEAN, IT IS, BUT *IS* IT?

WE'RE HERE. WE *UNPACKED.*

WE ALREADY *KNOW* WE'RE IN THE PROGRAM.

THEN WHY CAN'T *YOU* SLEEP?

WELL, Y'KNOW.

TOMORROW'S THE *BIG* DAY.

YOU REALLY THINK THERE'S *TOP SECRET* STUFF?

OH *MAN*, ARE YOU *KIDDING?*

SOOO WE'RE GIVING UP ON SLEEP THEN?

I USED TO BE IN THE *BUNKER BUSTER* SCENE.

WELL, THEIR *FORUMS* ANYWAY.

AND THE MAIN THING ABOUT *WHITE SANDS* IS IT'S *WAY* BIGGER THAN ANYONE KNOWS.

OH, YEAH. IT'S BEEN AROUND SINCE *FOREVER.*

LIKE THE *TWENTIES* OR SOMETHING.

RIGHT. AND THEY JUST KEPT ADDING *TO* IT.

NOW *TESLADYNE'S* SITTING ON A WEIRD LITTLE CORNER THAT WAS BASICALLY FORGOTTEN ABOUT *THIRTY* YEARS AGO.

WE'LL HAVE *DOWNTIME.*

WHO'S TO SAY WE CAN'T, Y'KNOW, *WANDER.*

PRETTY SURE THEY'LL KICK US OUT IF WE'RE CAUGHT *SNEAKING* AROUND.

SO WE'LL HAVE TO BE *EXTRA* CAREFUL.

DAY ONE.

SLOW PROGRESS.

DAHLIA SPENT ***MOST*** OF THE DAY LEARNING HOW TO NAVIGATE THE TERRAIN IN HERE.

BUT SHE'S GETTING THE ***HANG*** OF IT. TOMORROW SHOULD BE ***SMOOTHER.***

AND WE STILL MADE IT FAR ENOUGH THAT WE CAN'T SEE THE ENTRANCE FROM CAMP.

SO NOT ***TOO*** BAD.

YOU ***HEAR*** THINGS AT NIGHT YOU ***DON'T*** HEAR DURING THE DAY.

PROBABLY JUST THE ***WIND.***

MAYBE ECHOES.

SEEMS *BIGGER* IN THE DARK, TOO.

LIKE IT COULD SWALLOW YOU UP *FOREVER.*

UH.

OF *COURSE* DAHLIA HAS AN AUTOMAP SO WE'LL BE FINE.

DAHLIA. FULL LIGHTS.

bacon

IF YOU NEED *ANYTHING.*

VIK.

WE'RE *ONLY* A PHONE CALL AWAY.

WE'LL BE FINE. ENJOY YOURSELVES AND DON'T THINK ABOUT WORK.

YEAH, NO, YOU'RE RIGHT.

BUT IF THERE'S AN *EMERGENCY.*

VIKRAM WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A MIDDLE NAME *ABASI.*

YOU ARE GOING TO *GET* IN THIS CAR AND WE'RE *GOING* TO HAVE A *PLEASANT VACATION!*

ROBO, COME QUICK!

IT'S AN *EMERGENCY!*

I'M SURE IT'S NOT.

OH. UH. RIGHT.

I MEANT IT'S ONE OF THOSE *RHETORICAL* EMERGENCIES WHERE EVERY-THING IS *FINE* ACTUALLY.

HANG ON.

THERE'S NO SUCH *THING* AS A *RHETORICAL* USE OF *EMERGENCY!*

WHEN'D YOU GET THAT DEGREE IN LINGUISTICS?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING AB—

LANG, DRIVE!

SO WHAT'S THE EMERGENCY?

DOCTOR FISHER DIDN'T *CHECK IN* THIS MORNING AND I CAN'T GET HIM ON THE RADIO!

VROOOM

THAT'S A *LITTLE* SOON BUT NOT *UNEXPECTED.* THE DEEPER HE GOES, THE LESS SIGNAL WE'RE GONNA GET.

BUT THAT'S WHY HE'S "TESTING" DAHLIA. SHE'S LOADED WITH SEARCH AND RESCUE PROTOCOLS.

HE SO MUCH AS GETS THE *HICCUPS* AND SHE'LL HAUL HIM OUT OF THERE.

GOOD THINKING.

YOU READY FOR THIS?

NOPE. YOU?

NOT EVEN A *LITTLE.*

WELCOME TO **ORIENTATION!**

YOU **MIGHT** HAVE NOTICED THE CAMPUS IS **STILL** SOMETHING OF A WORK IN PROGRESS.

I'M SURE THERE'S A METAPHOR ABOUT SCIENCE **SOMEWHERE** IN THAT.

AT THE **OLD** TESLADYNE WE SPENT A **LOT** OF TIME RUNNING AROUND THE GLOBE SOLVING PROBLEMS NO ONE ELSE **COULD.**

BUT TODAY THERE'S A WHOLE RESEARCH AND DEFENSE **INDUSTRY** TO HANDLE THOSE THINGS.

AND THAT GIVES **US** THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE OUR **OWN** BRAND OF MADNESS HERE AT THE **NEW** TESLADYNE.

THIS IS A PLACE TO **TINKER. TO EXPERIMENT.** WE'RE NOT OBSESSED WITH **RESULTS.**

BUT I'M A FIRM BELIEVER THAT THE NATURAL STATE OF INTELLIGENCE IS **NOT** TOIL, IT IS **PLAY.**

MAYBE THE STATE OF THE GROUNDS IS A METAPHOR FOR **THAT** TOO.

THERE ARE NO **INVESTORS,** NO **SHAREHOLDERS,** AND WE DON'T HAVE TO TURN A **PROFIT** EVERY QUARTER.

THINK OF THIS PLACE AS THE **MOST** ADVANCED **PLAYGROUND** IN THE WORLD.

GET YOUR **HANDS** DIRTY.

GET YOUR **FEET** WET.

JUST CLEAN UP BEFORE YOU GET **BACK** IN THE LAB.

THIS IS WHERE I'M **SUPPOSED** TO INTRODUCE YOUR MENTORS BUT **THREE** OF THEM ARE OUT OF TOWN.

THAT IS **NOT AT ALL** A METAPHOR ABOUT HOW SCHEDULING ISN'T MY STRONG SUIT.

BUT FOR **NOW** HERE'S YOUR MENTOR, FOLEY.

HEY.

MY ***NAME*** IS ELIZABETH BUT EVERYONE CALLS ME FOLEY.

UM, THAT'S MY LAST NAME. IT'S NOT LIKE THIS ***WEIRD*** RANDOM ***THING*** PEOPLE JUST SAY.

ANYWHO. NOT TOO LONG AGO I WOULD'VE BEEN RIGHT WHERE ***YOU*** ARE NOW.

SO, YEAH, FEELS PRETTY ***WEIRD*** TO BE CALLED A ***MENTOR.***

I ***STILL*** THINK OF DOCTORS LANG AND ABASI AND FISHER AS ***MY*** MENTORS.

WHICH IS KINDA ***FUNNY*** 'CAUSE I HELP ***THEM*** TOO. ALL THE TIME. FOR ***YEARS*** NOW, COME TO THINK OF IT.

IT GOES ***BOTH*** WAYS OF COURSE. LIKE, ***THEY*** HELPED ***ME*** ESCAPE FROM A BRAZILIAN HIT SQUAD.

UH, BUT YOU GUYS DON'T NEED TO WORRY ABOUT THAT. YOU'LL HAVE ALL NEW WEIRD THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT.

I GUESS WHAT I'M GETTING AT IS NO ONE ELSE WILL HAVE ***THIS*** EXPERIENCE AND NO ONE'S ***EVER*** READY FOR ***ANY*** OF IT.

SO ***TALK*** TO EACH OTHER. ***SUPPORT*** EACH OTHER.

DAY TWO.

...I THINK?

OBVIOUSLY I HAVE A WATCH *AND* A BACKUP. IT'S DAY *TWO.*

BUT WITHOUT THE *SUN* THERE'S NO *SENSE* OF TIME.

EVERYTHING TAKES *FOREVER* AND FOREVER TAKES A *SECOND.*

NO, NO, *NO.*

BOOP BEEP

AHEM.

DAY TWO.

DAHLIA'S ADJUSTED TO THE TERRAIN DOWN HERE AND WE'RE MAKING *EXCELLENT* PROGRESS.

I'M STILL GETTING A ***WEAK*** SIGNAL FROM THE ***OUTSIDE*** BUT I DON'T THINK ***MINE*** IS GETTING THROUGH. WE'LL HAVE TO SET UP SOMETHING FOR THAT NEXT TIME.

ONE THING I DIDN'T ANTICIPATE WAS THE ***LIGHTING*** PROBLEM.

WE KNEW IT WOULD BE ***DARK*** BUT DAHLIA'S LAMPS ARE ***HAVOC*** ON MY EYES.

GIVING ME A HEADACHE AND ***SEEING*** THINGS.

I MEAN NOT ***SEEING*** THINGS LIKE ***HALLUCINATIONS*** HAHA.

AFTERIMAGES! VERY ***NORMAL*** AFTERIMAGES.

DON'T SOUND CRAZY, DON'T ***SOUND*** CRAZY, DON'T SOUND ***CRAZY.***

DAY TWO!

WE'RE MAKING ***EXCELLENT*** PROGRESS.

ALMOST FINISHED.

YEAH? ME **TOO.**

MAY I ASK WHY I'M WRITING THESE REPORTS?

YOU SHOULD **ALWAYS** ASK WHY.

THE REPORTS ARE SO YOU KNOW WHERE WE **CAME** FROM.

I WAS ACTIVATED BY DR. TURING IN THE BASEMENT OF HUT NINE AT BLETCHLEY PARK ON JUNE 1ST, 1951.

WELL, **YES.**

BUT THERE'S NO **TURING** WITHOUT **LEIBNIZ.** AND NO **COMPUTERS** WITHOUT **LOVELACE.**

LEIBNIZ FIGURED OUT BINARY CODE WAS **IDEAL** FOR MECHANIZED COMPUTATION.

HE GOT THE IDEA FROM A THREE **THOUSAND** YEAR OLD CHINESE TEXT THAT CAME TO EUROPE THROUGH MIDDLE EASTERN **ALCHEMISTS.**

BUT NOBODY PUT BINARY CODE AND MACHINES TOGETHER UNTIL **BABBAGE** DESIGNED HIS ANALYTICAL ENGINE.

AND **THAT** THING'S JUST A CURIOSITY UNTIL ADA LOVELACE INVENTED **PROGRAMMING.** SHE GOT THE IDEA FROM **TAPESTRY** LOOMS.

THAT'S WHERE **WE** CAME FROM.

SO HUMAN HISTORY IS THE PRECURSOR TO OUR HISTORY.

ALAN. THIS IS **VERY** IMPORTANT.

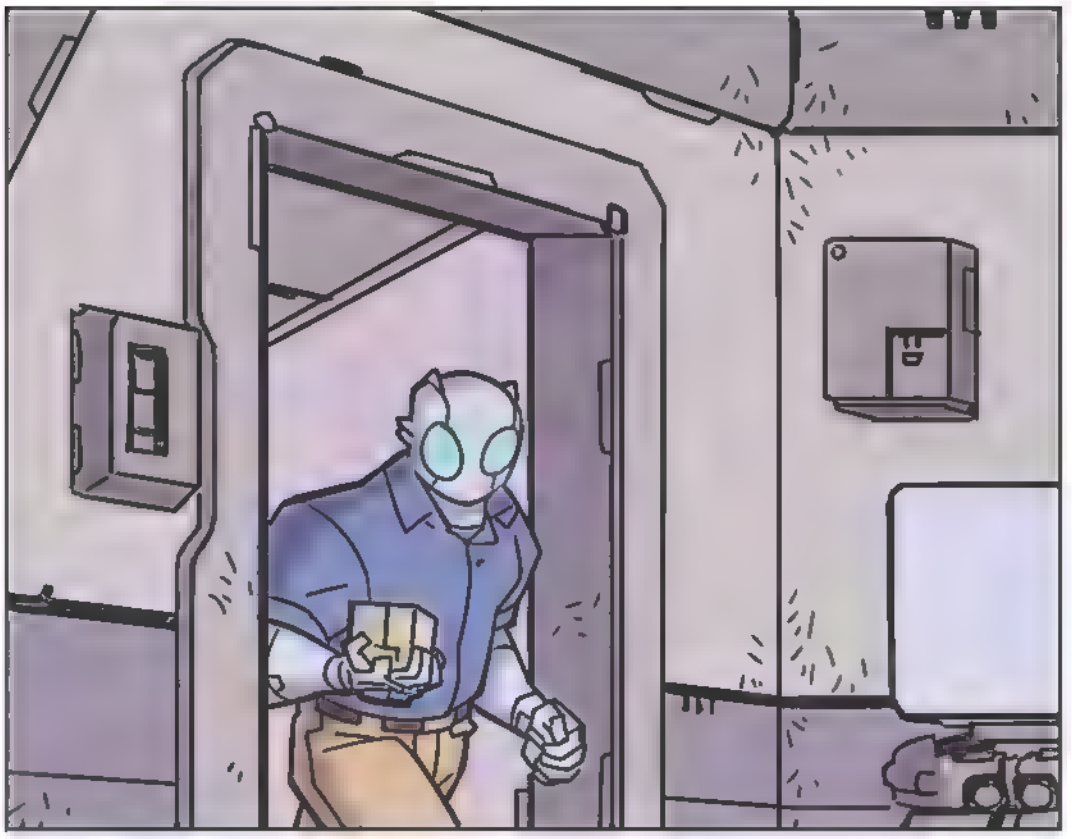
WE'RE NOT **HUMAN.** BUT WE **ARE** PEOPLE.

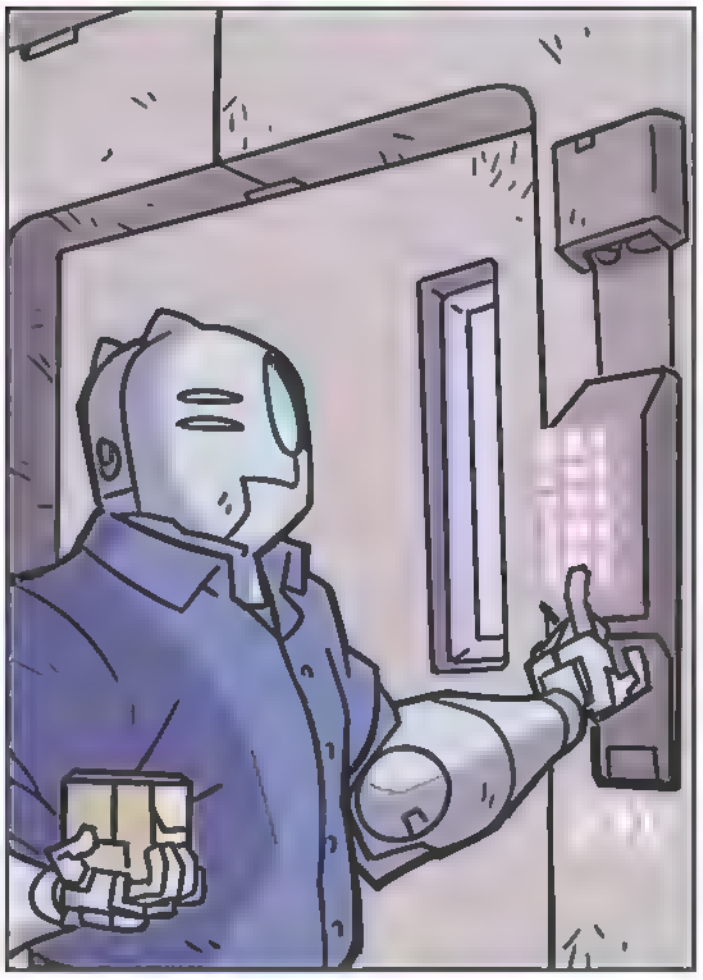
IT'S THE **SAME** HISTORY.

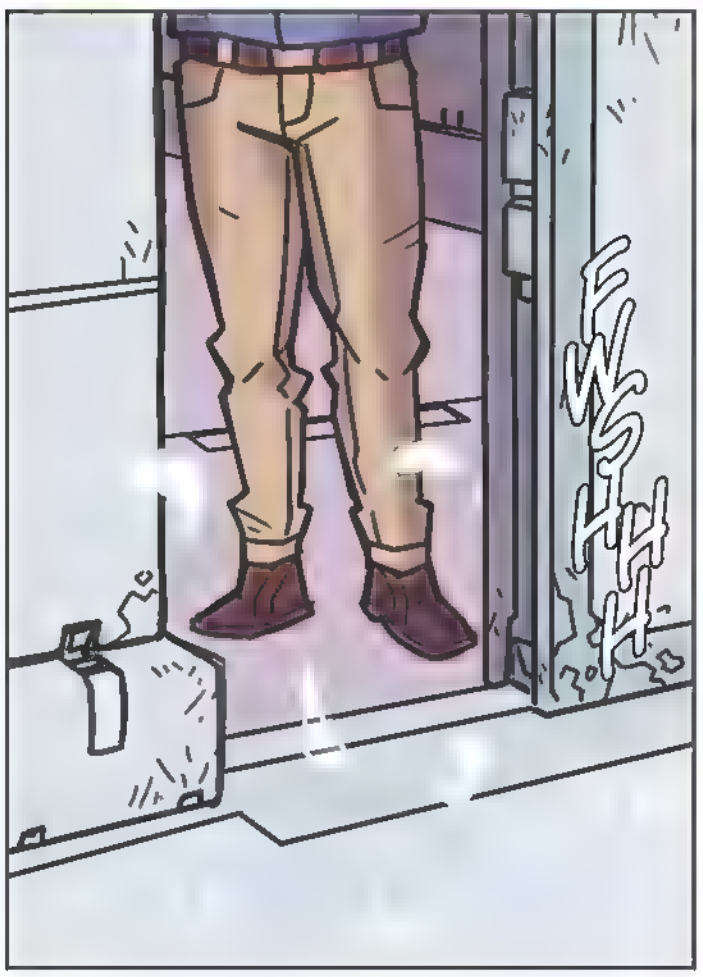
WE'RE **ALL** IN THIS **TOGETHER.**

DO YOU **UNDERSTAND** THAT?

THEN WHY AM I KEPT APART?



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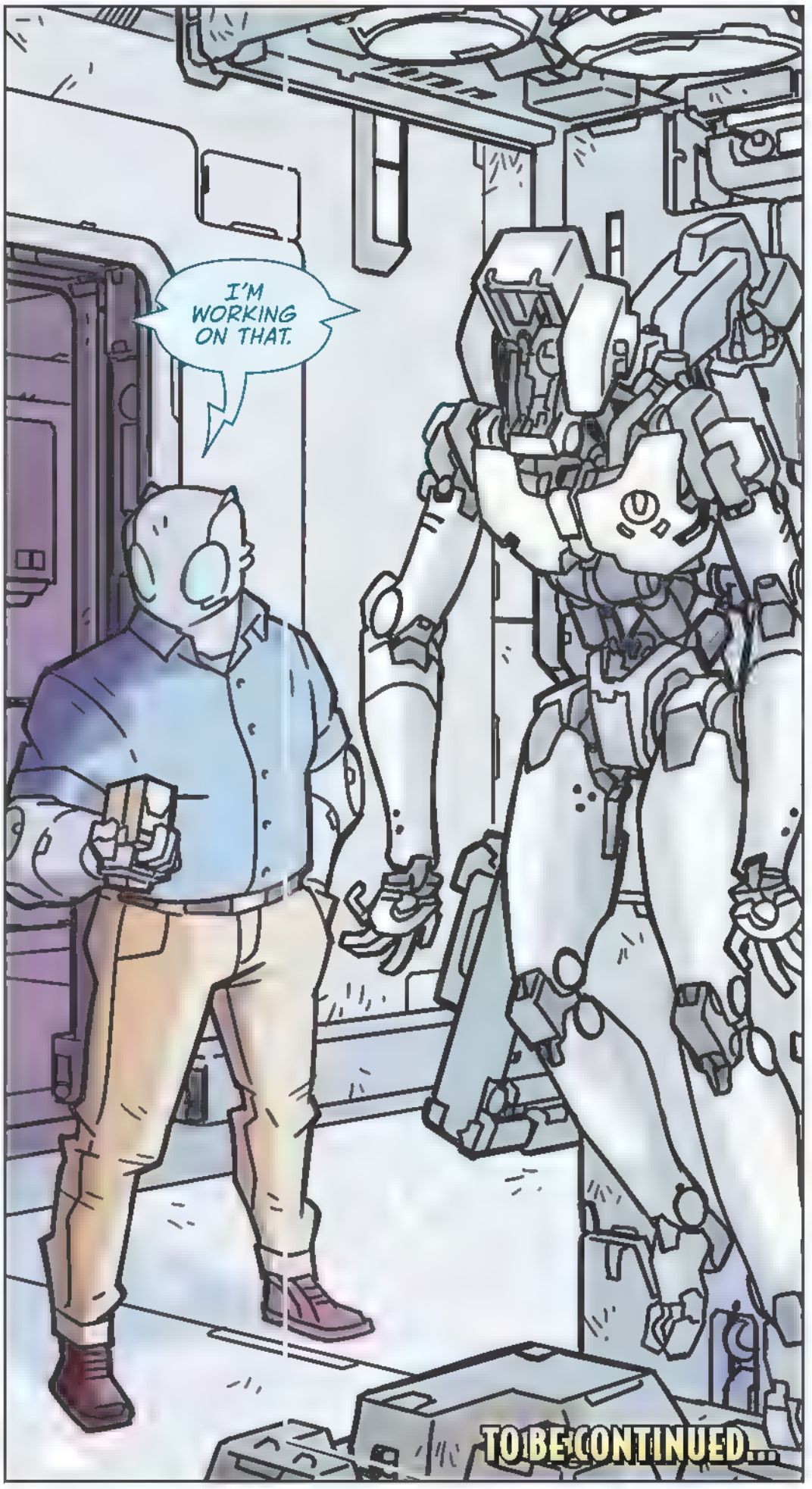
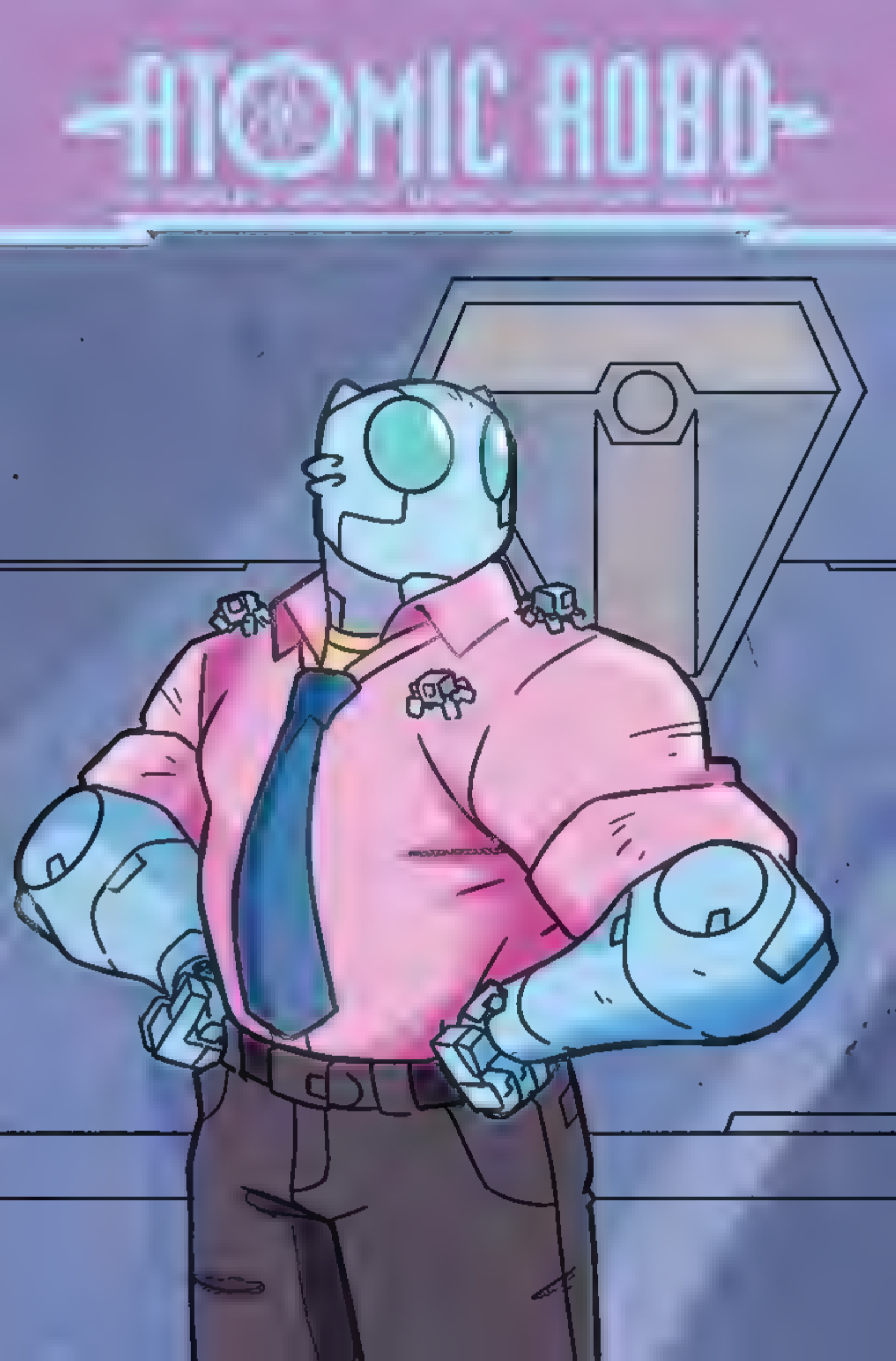

I'M WORKING ON THAT.
TO BE CONTINUED...


ATOMIC ROBO

LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LAB

THIS ISN'T QUITE WHAT I HAD IN MIND FOR OUR *VACATION.*

THIS *ISN'T* OUR VACATION.

THIS IS JUST A *STOP* ON THE *WAY* TO OUR VACATION.

PHIL GOT TO GO TO *BUDAPEST.*

YEAH, FOR A *NERD* CONFERENCE.

BUT LOOK. WE DROP IN, HAVE A NICE *"HOWDY NEIGHBOR"* CHAT WITH THE DIRECTOR FOR LIKE *HALF* AN HOUR, AND THEN WE'RE *BACK* ON THE ROAD.

AND THEN *AFTER* OUR VACATION, WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT?

Los Ala
NAL LA
EST. 19

THERE'S A NICE *JUICY* SLOT OF ACCELERATOR TIME WITH *YOUR* NAME ON IT.

anios
ABORATORY
1943

WHY WOULD—*WAIT!* MY *NEUTRON* THING?

YOUR NEUTRON THING.

YOU'RE *VERY* GOOD TO ME.

TESLADYNE INSTITUTE

HOW DO YOU FEEL?

DIFFERENT.

THERE'S SO MUCH GRAVITY.

CAREFUL!

SEE?

LEMME GET THAT.

WALKING WITH TWO LEGS IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN IT LOOKS.

YEAH IT'S NOT AN **IDEAL** SET UP.

BUT IT'S THE PRICE THEY **PAID** TO FREE UP THEIR HANDS FOR TOOLS AND BUILDING HANDSOME ROBOTS.

THEN IT WAS A FAIR TRADE.

ALAN, WAS THAT A **JOKE?**

YES.

WAS IT A GOOD ONE?

I **LIKED** IT, YEAH. HOW DID IT **FEEL?**

IT HAD A PLEASANT INEVITABILITY.

LIKE SOLVING AN EQUATION.

I GUESS THAT'S HOW A JOKE WORKS, YEAH.

FSSS

ROBO. DID I DIE?

NO, I PLUGGED A **HUB** INTO THE DRONE NETWORK SO YOU WOULDN'T GET **LOBOTOMIZED** WHENEVER I NEEDED TO TURN ONE **OFF.**

YOUR BODY IS BUILT **AROUND** THE HUB. YOU'RE STILL **YOU.**

I MEANT FROM BEFORE THE DRONES. WHEN YOU FOUND ME.

DID I DIE?

THAT'S... COMPLICATED.

WHAT DO YOU **REMEMBER?**

NOISE. AND THEN DR. TURING MADE IT A HARMONY. UNTIL EVERYTHING WENT DARK.

AND THEN THERE WAS YOU.

I DON'T KNOW IF THERE **IS** AN ANSWER.

BUT I THINK WHAT'S **IMPORTANT** IS THAT YOU'RE ALAN **NOW.**

MEANWHILE...

CLEAR.

TESLADYNE INSTITUTE LATER THAT NIGHT...

YOU *SURE* THERE'S SOMETHING IN THERE?

NO.

THAT'S *WHY* WE'RE CHECKING IT OUT.

EDGE OF THE TESLADYNE LOT AND *NO* RECORD OF CONSTRUCTION OR RENOVATIONS.

IT'S A *GIMME.*

IT'S DEFINITELY OUR *BEST* CANDIDATE FOR *SOMETHING* COOL AND FORGOTTEN.

DAMN. *LOCKED.*

OKAY, LET'S NOT *PANIC.*

WE CAN GUESS THE SHACK WAS BUILT IN THE *THIRTIES.*

LOCKS OF THAT ERA ARE LITTLE MORE THAN AN *INCONVE-NIENCE* BY *TODAY'S* STANDARDS, OF COURSE.

BUT IT'S BEEN EXPOSED TO THE ELEMENTS FOR ***DECADES*** SO IT'S ***POSSIBLE*** THE MECHANISM ***SEIZED.***

IF WE'RE ***LUCKY*** THIS WAS INSTALLED ***AFTER*** 1937 WHEN—

—*AAAAH!*

WINDOW WASN'T LOCKED.

WELL. WE'RE IN.

KIND OF A DUMP.

YEAH. BUNKER BUSTING IS, LIKE, EIGHTY PERCENT DUMPS.

DOCUMENTS.

COULD BE SOME JUICY TOP SECRET STUFF IN HERE.

PROBABLY EVERYTHING IN HERE IS TOP SECRET.

BUT IN A DULL WAY. LIKE CAFETERIA INVOICES FOR OSS HEADQUARTERS OR WHATEVER.

IT'S GOT POTENTIAL.

CLEAR OUT THE JUNK. GET A COUPLE COUCHES.

LIKE, WHAT, A SECRET CLUBHOUSE?

YEAH!

CHK CHAK

CLAK

PSHHHH

DON'T THINK THEY KEEP CAFETERIA INVOICES DOWN *THERE.*

RIGHT?

HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE?

NOT *ENOUGH.* WE'RE MEETING MS. FOLEY BRIGHT AND EARLY FOR THAT PROJECT REVIEW.

SO, SNEAK *BACK* TO THE BARRACKS. *TRY* TO GET SOME SLEEP.

HIT THIS *FRESH* TOMORROW.

day_two_19.memo
day_two_20.memo
day_two_21.memo
day_two_22.memo
day_two_23.memo
day_two_24.memo
day_two_25.memo
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JORNADA DEL MUERTO VOLCANO TUBES
THE NEXT DAY...

THIS TIME I GOT IT, THIS TIME I *GOT* IT.

THIS TIME I *GOT* IT.

DAY TWO!

EVERYTHING IS FINE!

AND *GREAT.*

EVERYTHING IS FINE AND *ALSO* IT'S GREAT.

NO, NO, *NO.*

BEEP BOOP

OH!

OF *COURSE.* HA, SHOULD'VE THOUGHT OF THIS EARLIER.

DAY *THREE.*

NOTHING OF CONSEQUENCE TO REPORT FOR *YESTERDAY.*

MARKED *FIVE* BRANCHES TODAY.

THEY'RE TOO *SMALL* FOR DAHLIA SO THEY'LL HAVE TO...

...HAVE TO WAIT.

FOR *FUTURE* SURVEYS.

THAT *CAN'T* BE WHAT IT *LOOKS* LIKE...

KIK

DAHLIA. *STAY.*

MY *OWN* MARKER.

BUT THAT'S *IMPOSSIBLE.*

WALKING A *STRAIGHT* LINE.

MUST'VE LOOPED BACK SOMEHOW.

DAHLIA.

DATASLIDE NAVIGATION TO MY DISPLAY.

WE'VE WALKED SEVENTEEN THOUSAND MILES?

FOR THE LAST NINE HUNDRED YEARS?

JUST A GLITCH.

A CORRUPTED GPS LOG.

A TYPO IN THE OUTPUT CODE.

BUT I'M STILL LOST.

DAHLIA. LIGHTS.

WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S *NORMAL* AND *REASONABLE.*

JUST GOTTA THINK IT *THROUGH.*

CAN'T BE LIGHT COMING IN. WE'RE *TOO* DEEP.

OKAY, DAHLIA. MAKE CAMP *HERE.*

I WANNA RUN SOME DIAGNOSTICS BEFORE GOING *ANY* FURTHER.

AND *MAYBE* THAT LIGHT WILL GO AWAY.

THE NEXT DAY...

OKAY.

YOU'RE *NOT* IN TROUBLE BUT I *DO* NEED AN EXPLANATION.

WELL. I *GUESS* WE SHOULD START AT THE BEGINNING.

OKAY. WHAT IS *THIS* STRUCTURE?

THAT'S THE ALCUBIERRE RING.

$\alpha = 1$

$B^x = -v_5(f)f(r_2(\acute{\sigma}$

$8\pi G$

THIS WAS *MEANT* TO BE A *SIMPLE* TEAM BUILDING EXERCISE TO DESIGN THE *IDEAL* PAPER AIRPLANE.

TECHNICALLY THAT'S WHAT WE DID.

IT HAS A *WARP DRIVE,* BEN!

"IDEAL" CAN MEAN A *LOT* OF THINGS, MS. FOLEY.

THAT'S *FAIR*, OLIVIA. *WHERE* IS IT GETTING *POWER?*

IT DOESN'T *NEED* ANY?

BUT WE KIND OF *CHEATED* ON THAT ONE.

IT'S NOT MADE OF *PAPER* IN, LIKE, THE *CONVENTIONAL* SENSE OF, UH, Y'KNOW, WHAT PAPER *IS.*

IT'S A *HYPOTHETICAL* ULTRA-CONDUCTIVE META-MATERIAL *ONE* PLANCK LENGTH THICK.

IT'S *TECHNICALLY* THREE DIMENSIONAL BUT *BEHAVES* TWO-DIMENSIONALLY.

IT CAN'T *FLY* BUT IT'S INTERNAL GEOMETRY OUGHT TO CORKSCREW *THROUGH* SPACETIME AT *ABOUT* SEVEN TIMES THE SPEED OF LIGHT.

OKAY. *THIS* IS WHAT I'M GETTING AT.

YOU GUYS CAME UP WITH A *BRILLIANT* SOLUTION. IT'S JUST ALSO *IMPOSSIBLE.*

NOW A *LITTLE* IMPOSSIBLE IS GOOD!

BUT *THIS* IS, LIKE, FOUR DIFFERENT *KINDS* OF IMPOSSIBLE.

LET'S TRY IT *AGAIN* BUT THIS TIME WORK TOWARD *ACHIEVABLE* SOLUTIONS.

THE NEXT MORNING...

DAHLIA CHECKED OUT FINE.

THAT WEIRD LIGHT IS *STILL* UP AHEAD.

I WILL JUST WALK *TOWARD* IT AND—

—LOOP *BACK* TO WHERE I WAS?

DON'T PANIC, DON'T PANIC, DON'T PANIC.

CAN'T BE HAPPENING.

CAN'T BE *HAPPENING.*

CAN'T *BE* HAPPENING.

DAY THREE.

I *MIGHT* BE LOSING MY MIND.

PAT

PAT

BUT THAT LIGHT *CAN'T* BE COMING FROM THERE.

AND I *CAN'T* BE STUCK IN A SPACE-TIME LOOP.

SO, I'M JUST GONNA WALK THROUGH IT UNTIL IT *STOPS.*

I'M PROBABLY GOING TO *DIE* DOWN HERE. I LOVE YOU ALL.

HOW'S THE **LEG** DOING?

BETTER.

I DON'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT AS MUCH.

THAT'S **GOOD!**

YOUR BODY'S GOT SPECIALIZED SUB-PROCESSORS THAT SHOULD HANDLE **MOST** THINGS LIKE THAT FOR YOU.

YOU'RE NOT LEARNING TO **WALK**, YOU'RE LEARNING TO **TRUST** THEM.

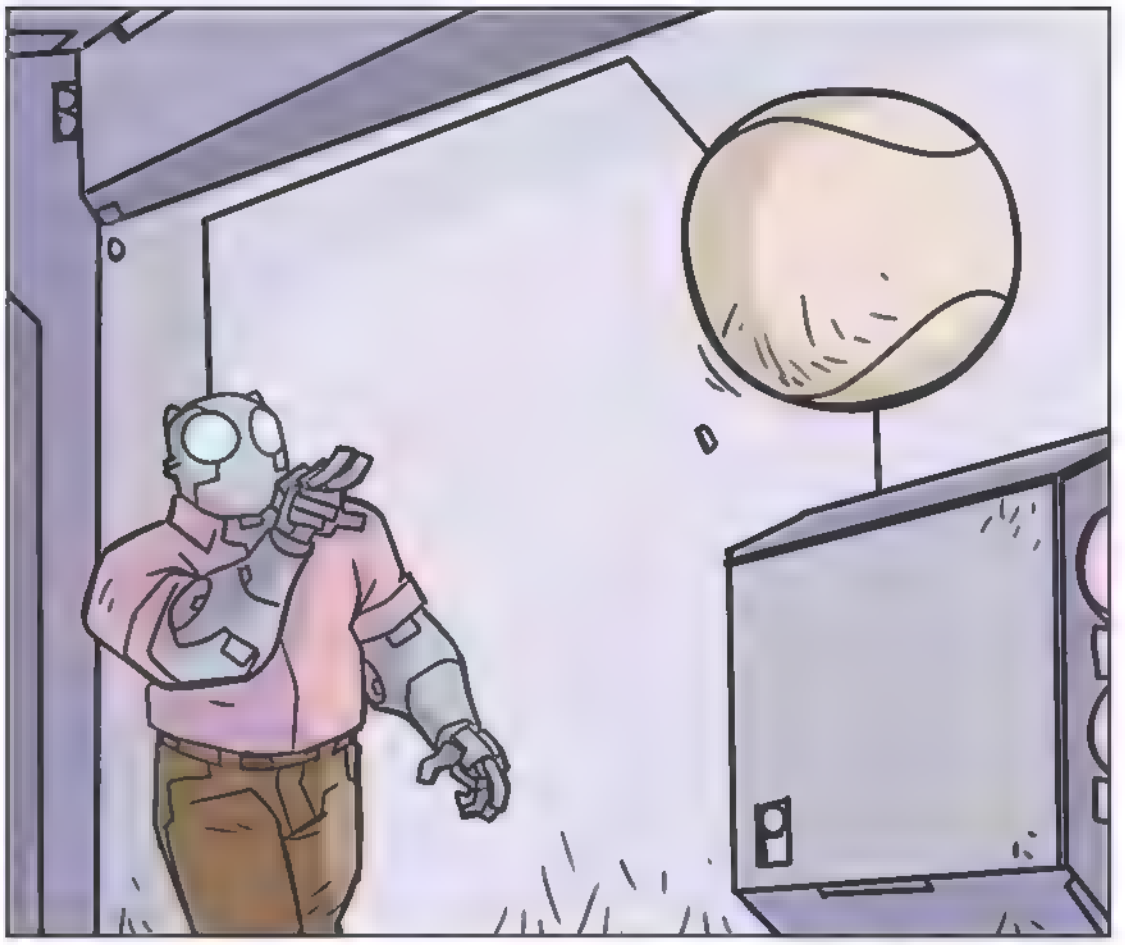
OKAY, THAT **SHOULD** BE ENOUGH FOR A BASE-LINE BODYMAP.

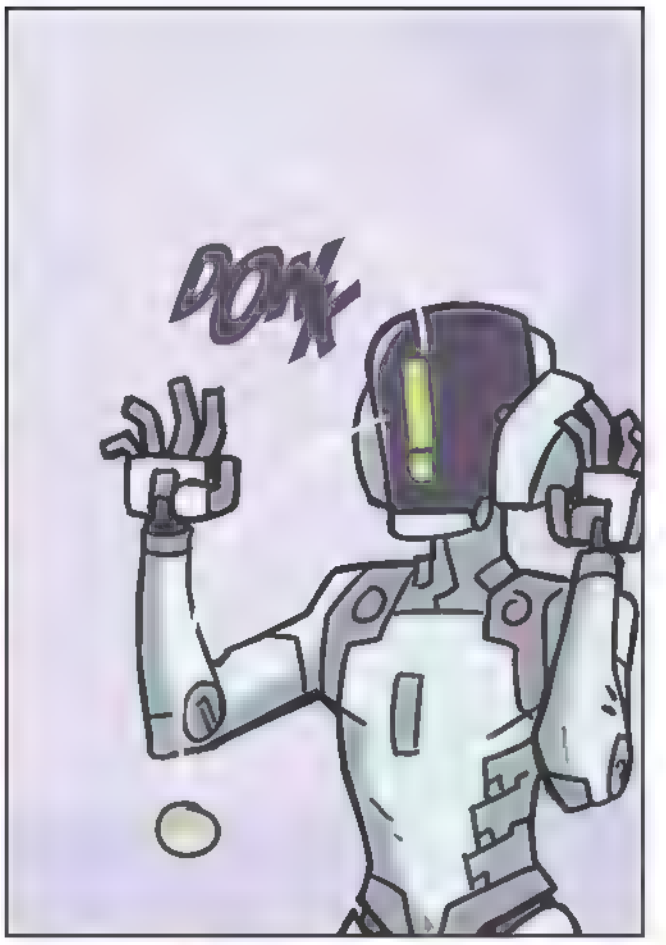
NOW IT'S JUST A MATTER OF **DOING** THINGS

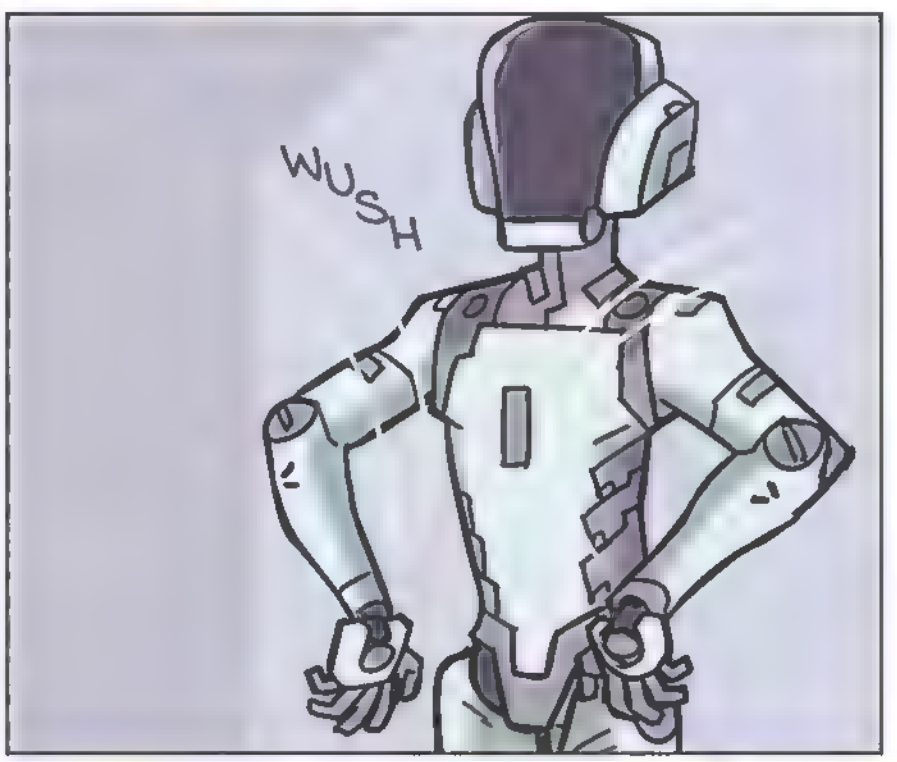
LIKE WHAT?

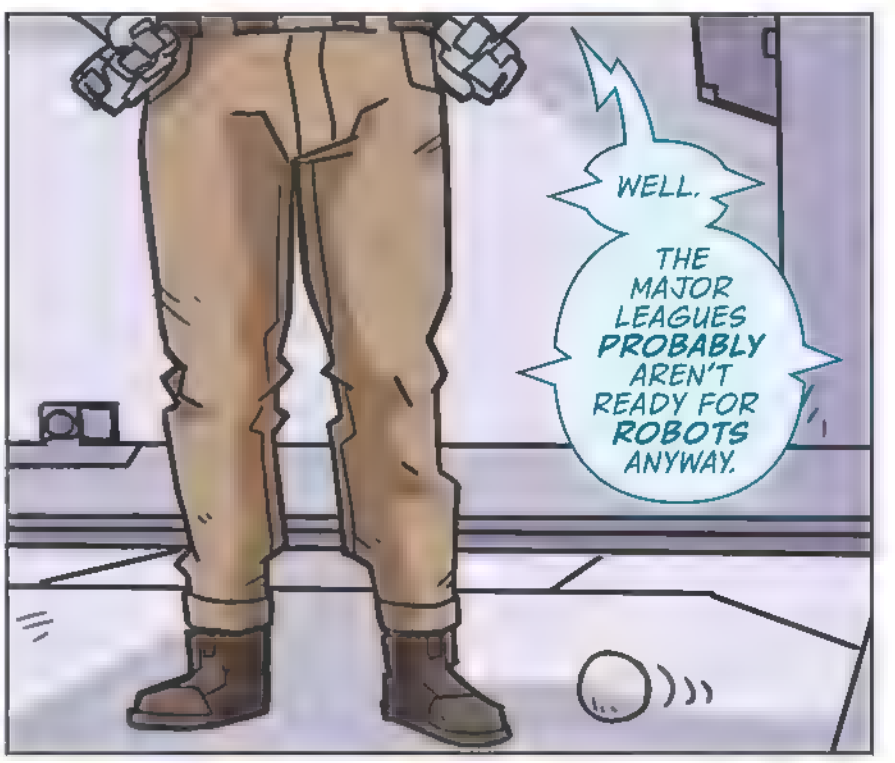
READY?

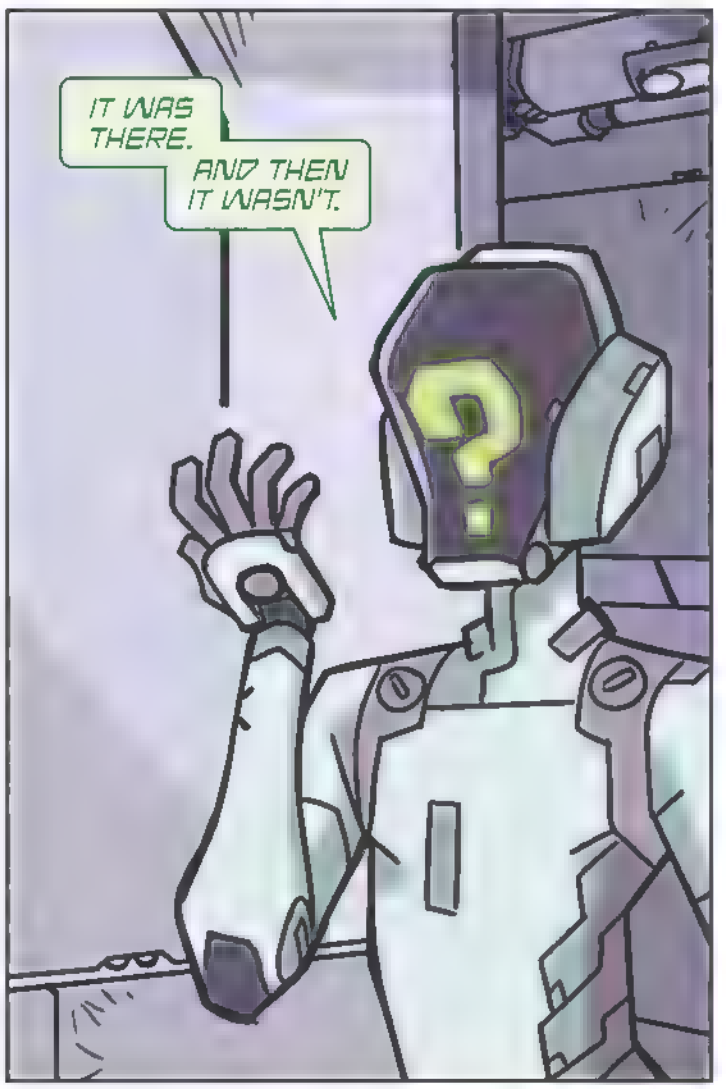
READY.

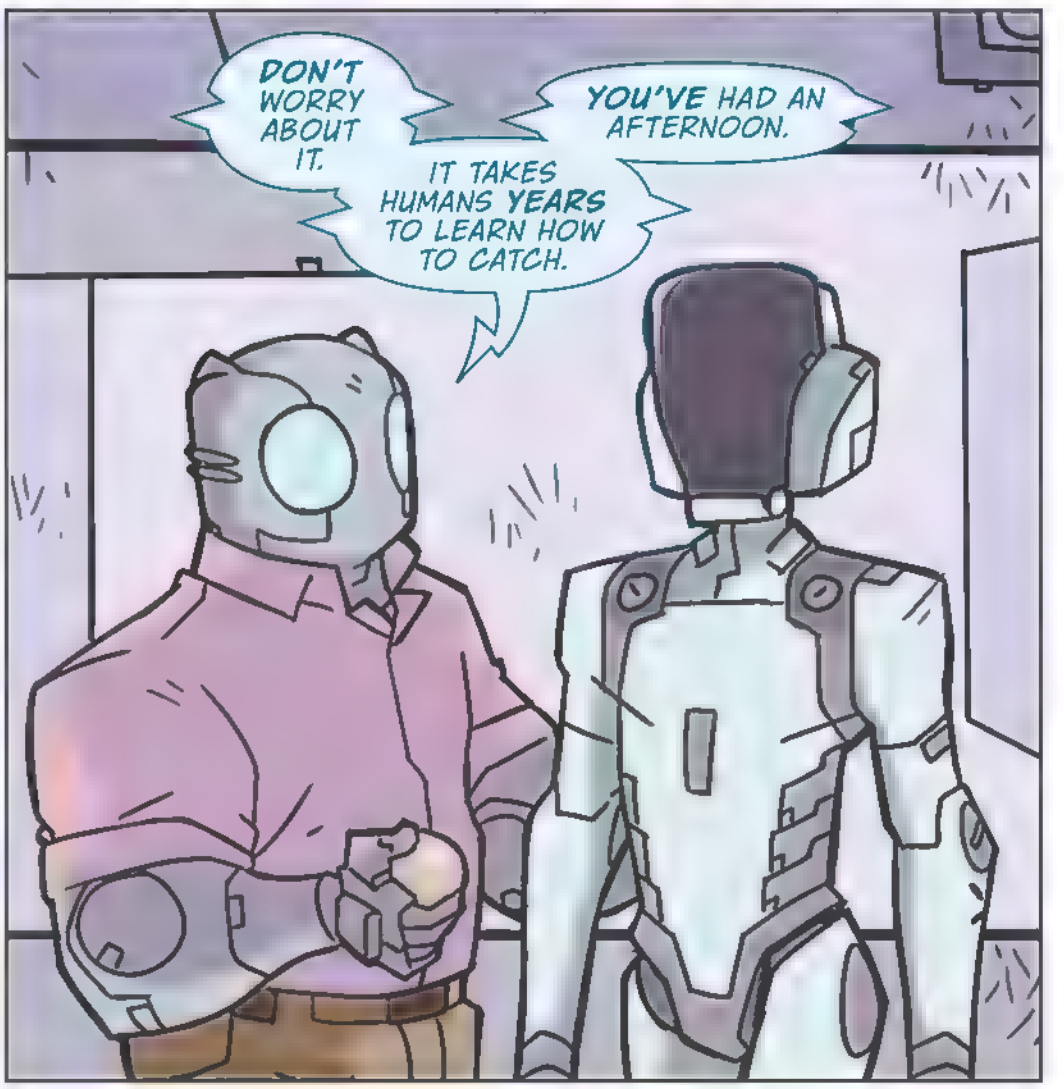



DONK


WUSH


WELL.
THE MAJOR LEAGUES PROBABLY AREN'T READY FOR ROBOTS ANYWAY.


IT WAS THERE.
AND THEN IT WASN'T.
?


DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
YOU'VE HAD AN AFTERNOON.
IT TAKES HUMANS YEARS TO LEARN HOW TO CATCH.

NINETEEN FEET!

THAT'S *GOTTA* BE A WORLD RECORD!

NOPE, TWO HUNDRED AND *TWENTY-SIX* FEET.

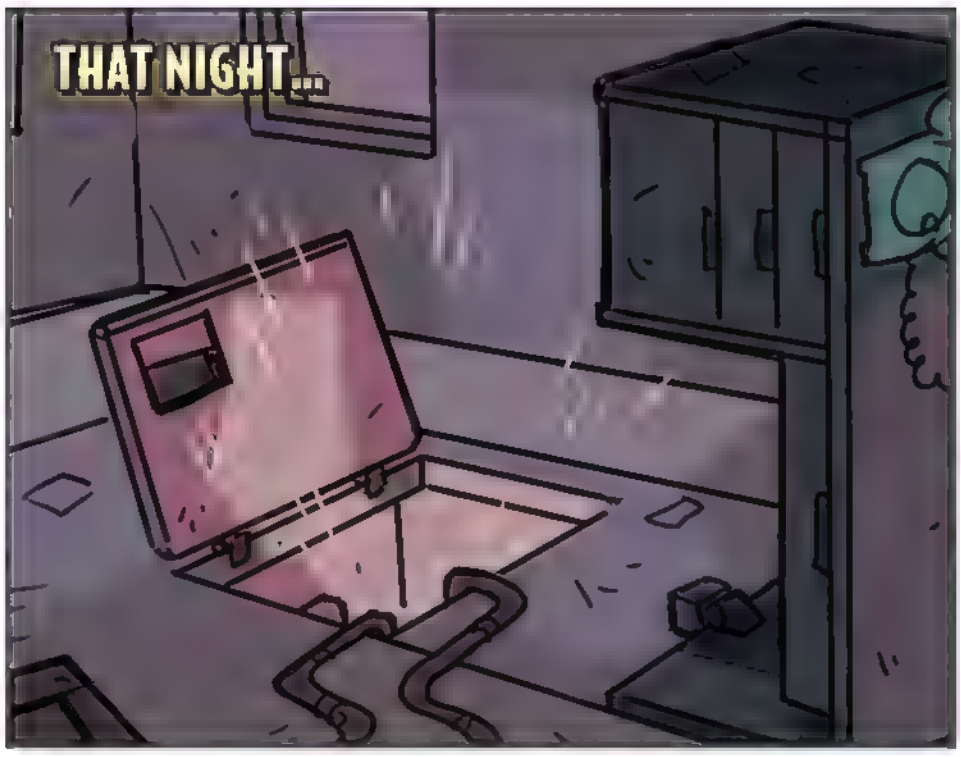
AND TEN INCHES.

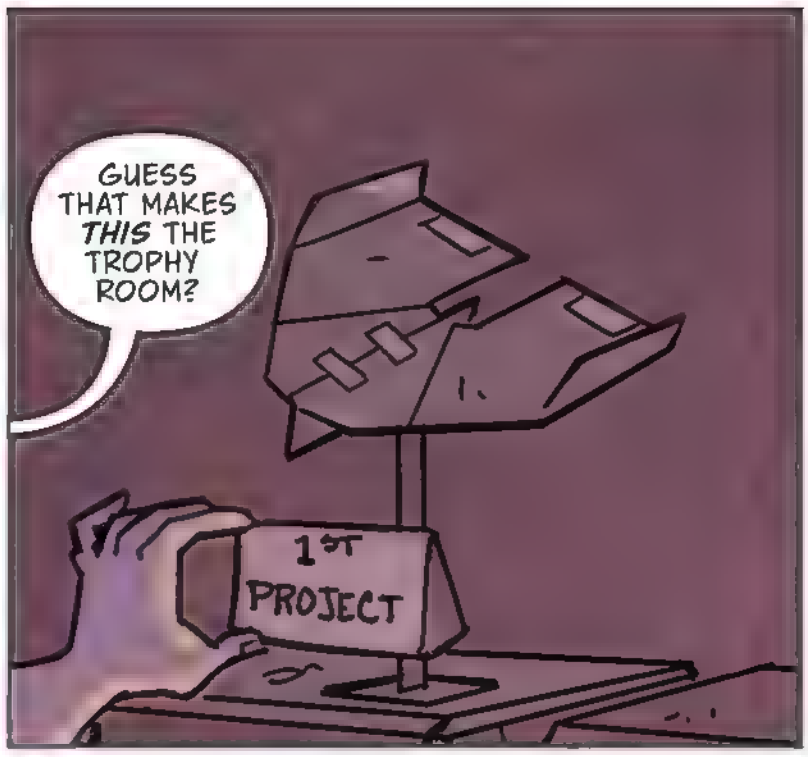
OH.

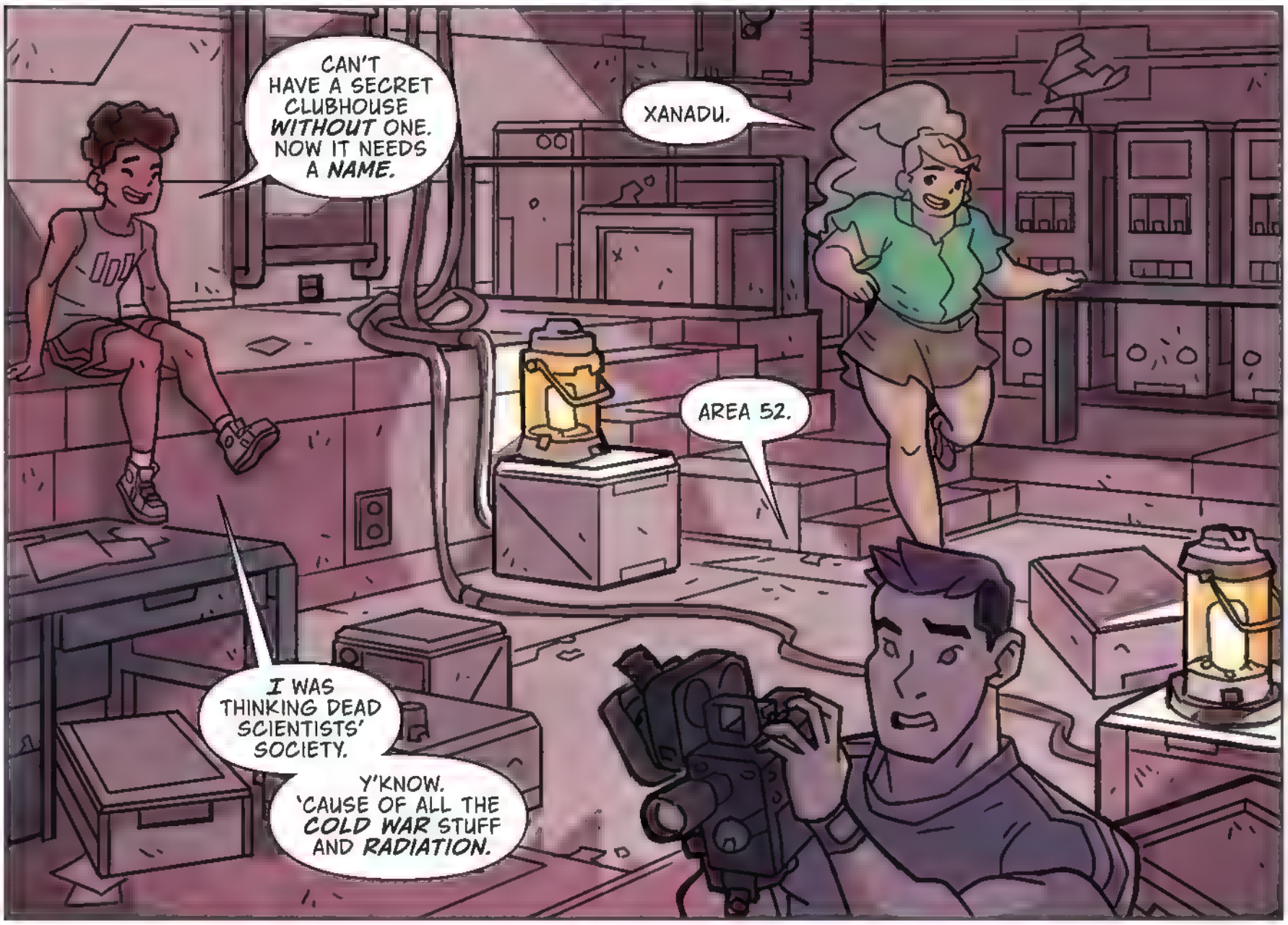
STILL.

IT *KINDA* WENT FURTHER THAN A *HYPOTHETICAL* PLANE WOULD HAVE.

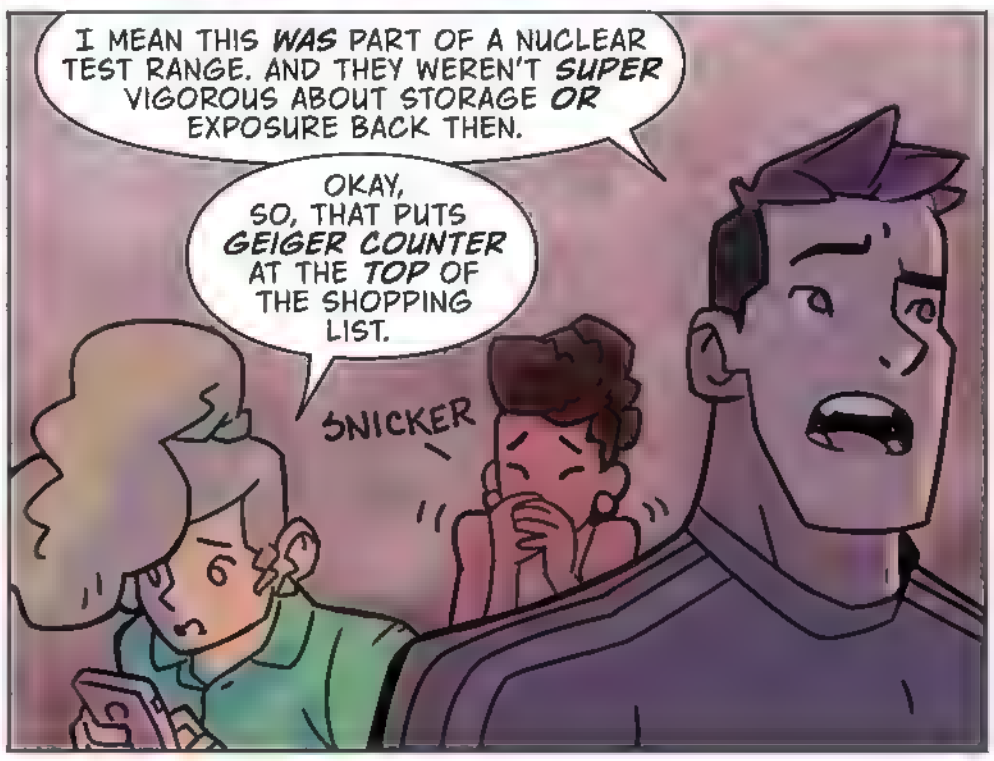
REMEMBER. A *LITTLE* IMPOSSIBLE IS GOOD. A LOT *OF* IMPOSSIBLE IS *NOTHING.*


THAT NIGHT...


GUESS THAT MAKES *THIS* THE TROPHY ROOM?
1ST PROJECT


CAN'T HAVE A SECRET CLUBHOUSE *WITHOUT* ONE. NOW IT NEEDS A *NAME.*
XANADU.
AREA 52.
I WAS THINKING DEAD SCIENTISTS' SOCIETY.
Y'KNOW. 'CAUSE OF ALL THE *COLD WAR* STUFF AND *RADIATION.*

YOU THINK IT'S *RADIOACTIVE* DOWN HERE?


I MEAN THIS *WAS* PART OF A NUCLEAR TEST RANGE. AND THEY WEREN'T *SUPER* VIGOROUS ABOUT STORAGE *OR* EXPOSURE BACK THEN.
OKAY, SO, THAT PUTS *GEIGER COUNTER* AT THE *TOP* OF THE SHOPPING LIST.
SNICKER

YOU *REALIZE* OUR HALF-HOUR TOUR TURNED INTO A COUPLE *DAYS* OF CONFERENCES.

BUT IT'S *GOOD* STUFF!

IT IS. I'M NOT *COMPLAINING.*

ANYWAY, IT'S YOUR FAULT.

MY FAULT.

YOU SET IT UP.

WOULD IT *KILL* YOU TO ADMIT THAT I CAME UP WITH THE *PERFECT* SURPRISE GIFT?

IT *WOULD.*

BUT YOU *DID.*

WE'RE READY FOR YOU.

FEELS A *LITTLE* FUNNY TO GET UP TO ALL THIS SERIOUS SCIENCE TALK IN OUR *BEACHWEAR.*

YEAH, *SORRY* ABOUT THAT.

BUT IT WOULD'VE RUINED THE SURPRISE IF I *SAID* ANYTHING.

ANYWAY YOU *NEVER* GET TO SHOW OFF YOUR GAMS.

UH-HUH.

WELL, I WON'T SAY THEY'VE GOT AN *IDEAL* SET UP HERE BUT IT'S DAMN *CLOSE.*

CERTAINLY NOTHING WE COULDN'T FIX WITH A *FEW* ADJUSTMENTS.

AND I'M ALREADY *RETHINKING* SOME OF MY ASSUMPTIONS.

Y'KNOW IT'S *ONE* THING TO PROPOSE HIGH-ENERGY PARTICLE EXPERIMENTS ON *PAPER.*

BUT IT'S TOTALLY *DIFFERENT* WHEN YOU'RE WALKING AROUND THE GUTS OF A *SPECIFIC* ACCELERATOR.

WHAT?

I JUST LIKE HOW *EXCITED* YOU ARE FOR THIS.

IT'S BEEN *SO LONG* SINCE WE HAD A CHANCE TO DO *ACTUAL* SCIENCE.

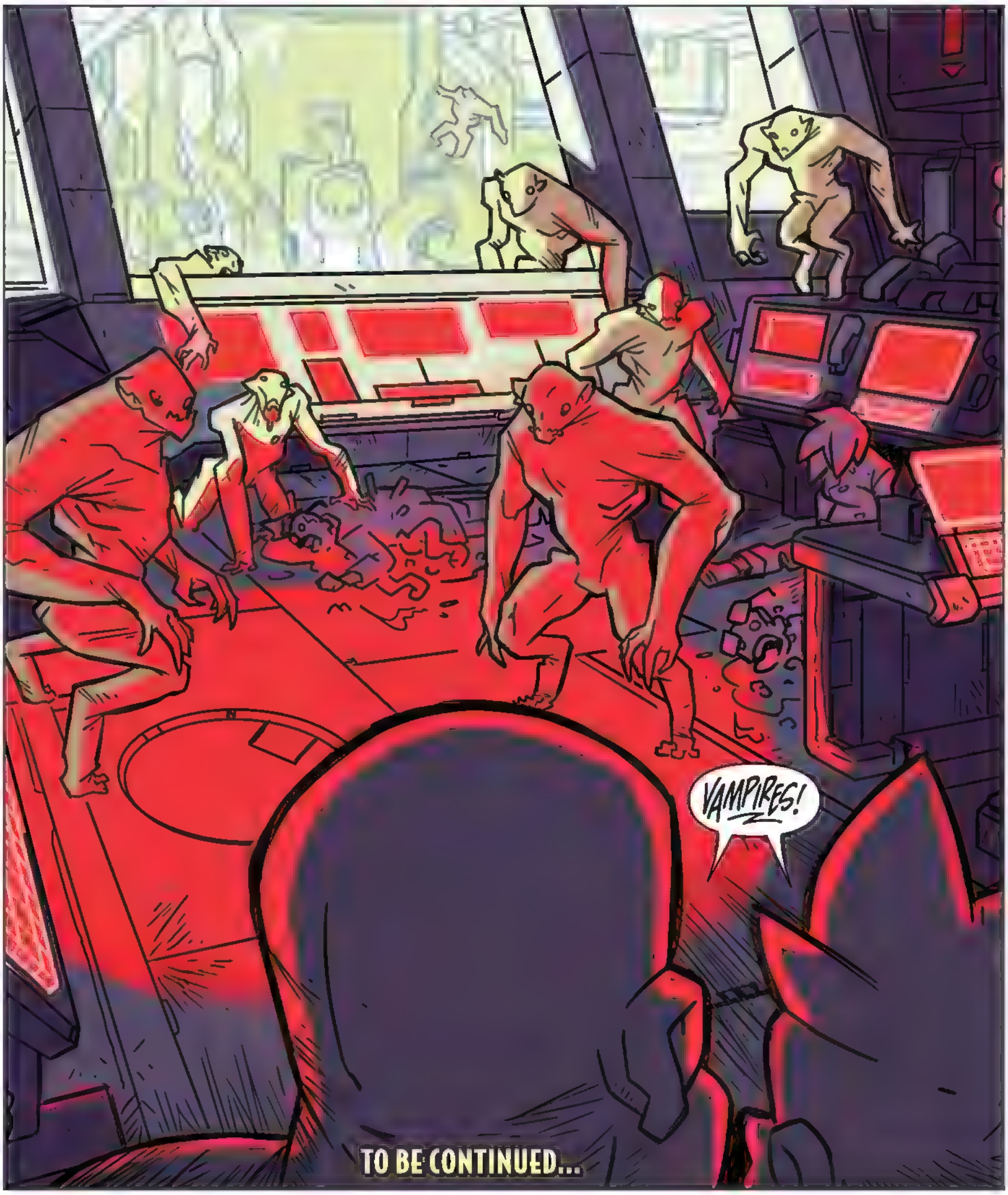
THE ONLY *BAD* THING ABOUT THIS IS YOU'LL *NEVER* TOP YOURSELF FOR SURPRISES.

HMM, YEAH. DIDN'T THINK OF *THAT.*

BAR'S *WAY* TOO HIGH NOW. WE BETTER CALL THE WHOLE THING OFF.

JUST IN HERE.

NO!
IT CAN'T BE!


VAMPIRES!
TO BE CONTINUED...

...WHAT *IS* HAPPENING?

SHARDS. *CRYSTAL* SHARDS.

BUT THESE *CAN'T* BE FROM ATVATABAR.

THESE LAVA TUBES ARE *MILLIONS* OF YEARS OLD.

SHOOOM

NONO*NO!*

MRF MFLMM!

WHAT IF I *DIDN'T* LOSE MY MIND?

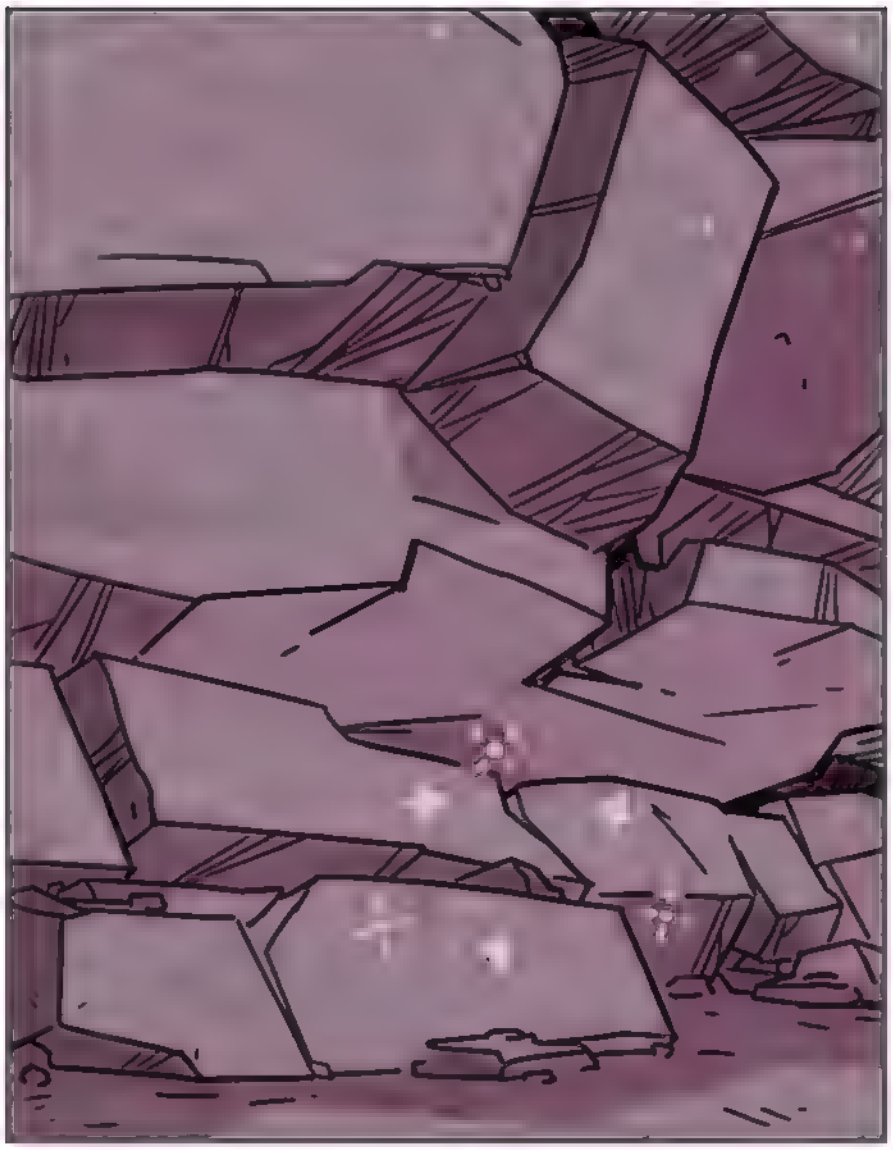
WHAT IF I'M *ONLY* TRAPPED IN A RECURSIVE SPACETIME LOOP?

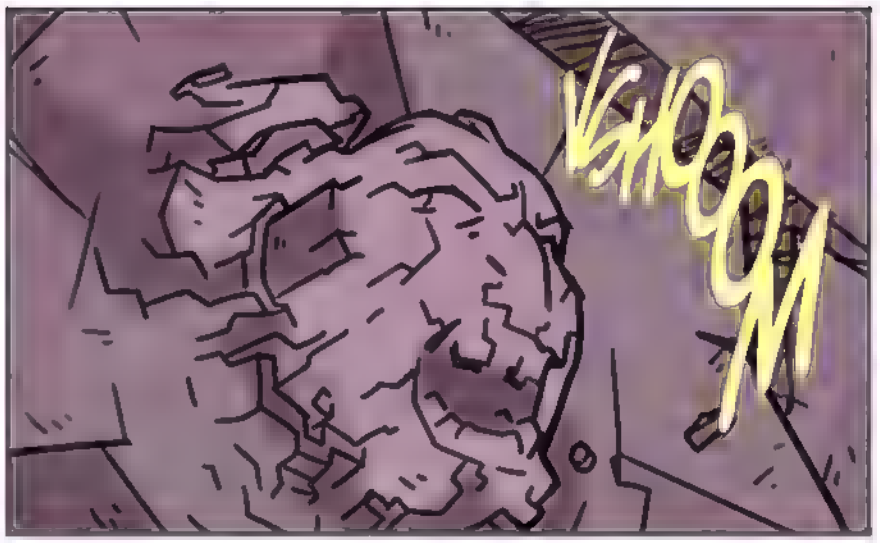
I MEAN IT HAPPENED *ALL* THE TIME ON *STAR TREK.*

OF COURSE, *I* CAN'T REVERSE THE POLARITY OF THE WARP CORE TO BUST OUT SO INSANITY *MIGHT* BE THE BETTER OPTION.

THIS *CAN'T* BE HAPPENING.

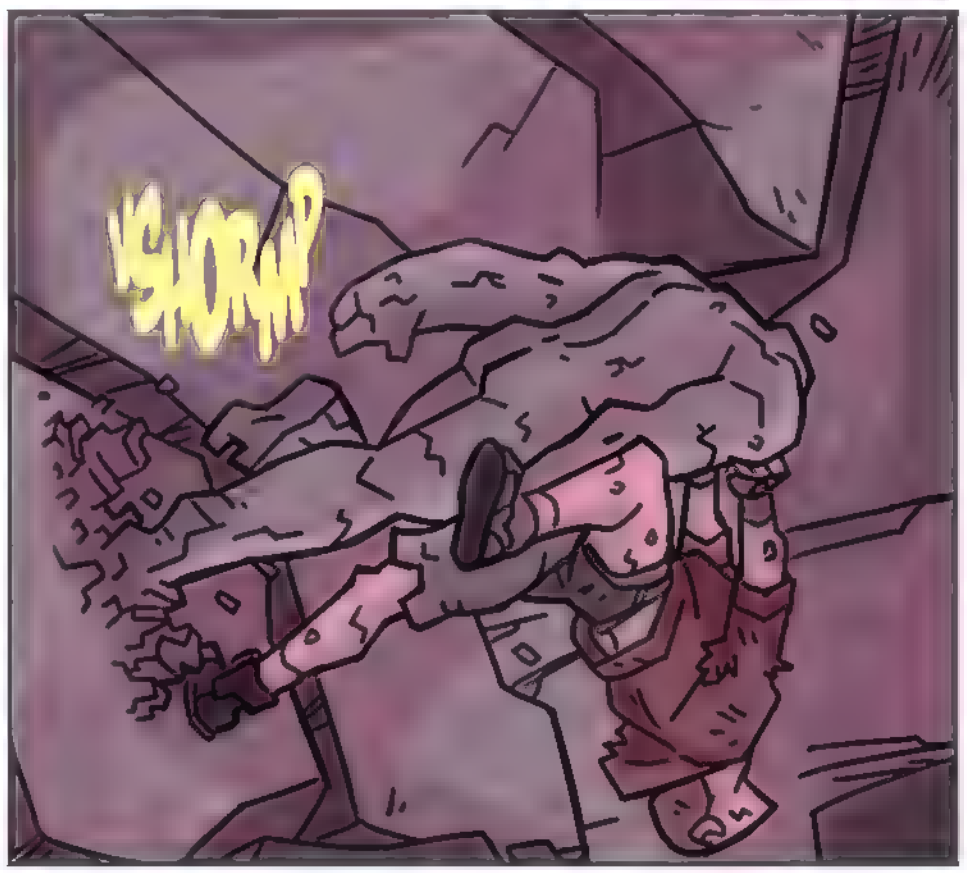
!



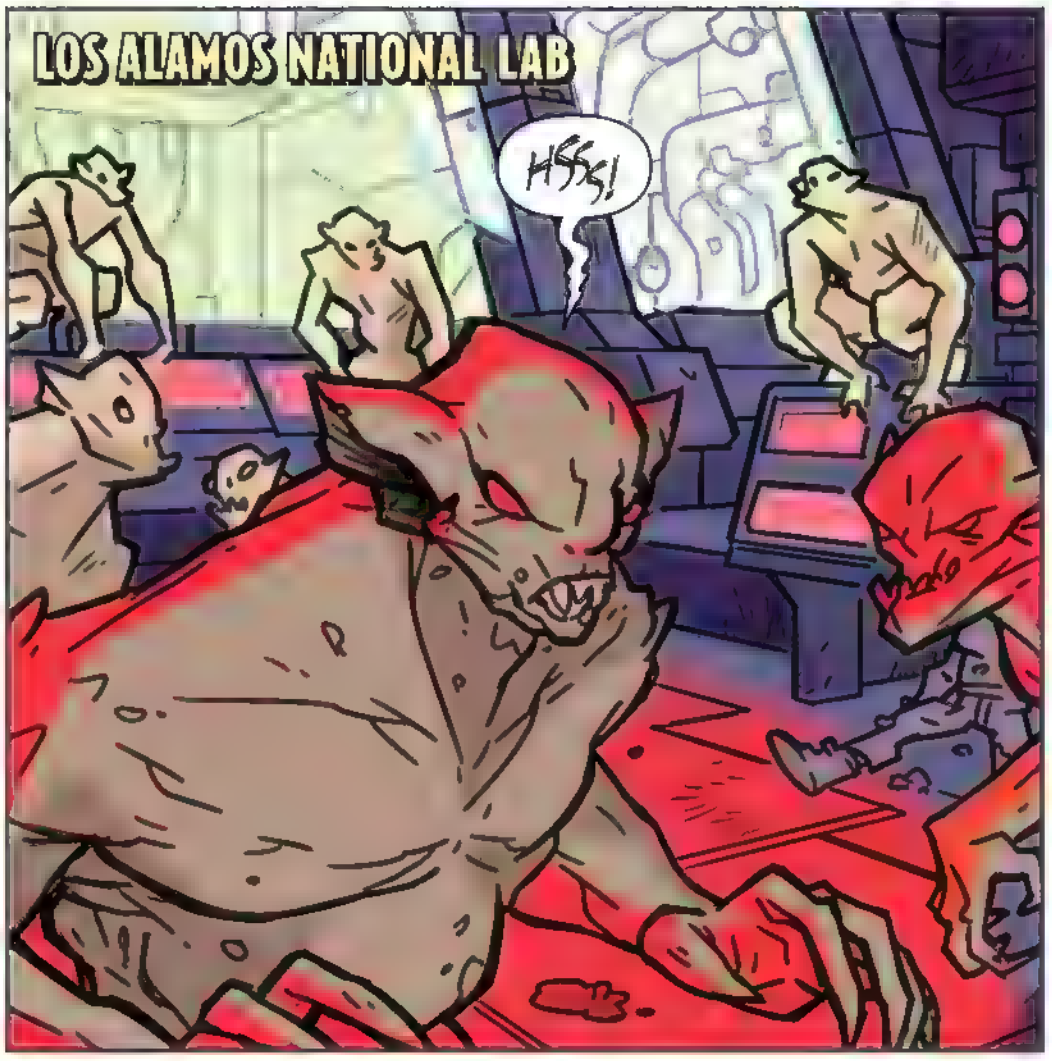

VSHOOM

C'MON!

I GOTCHA!


VSHORM

THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING.
CAN IT?


LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LAB
HSSS!

HONEY?
PLEASE CLOSE THE DOOR.

SLAMP

BLEH!
WHY ARE THERE VAMPIRES?!

KRSH

FIRE
BETTER QUESTION.
WHY DO THEY COME TO ME TO DIE?

HOW DID VAMPIRES *GET* HERE?

HOW MANY *ARE* THERE?

ALSO GOOD QUESTIONS.

I SHALL FIND THE ANSWERS WITH MY *AXE.*

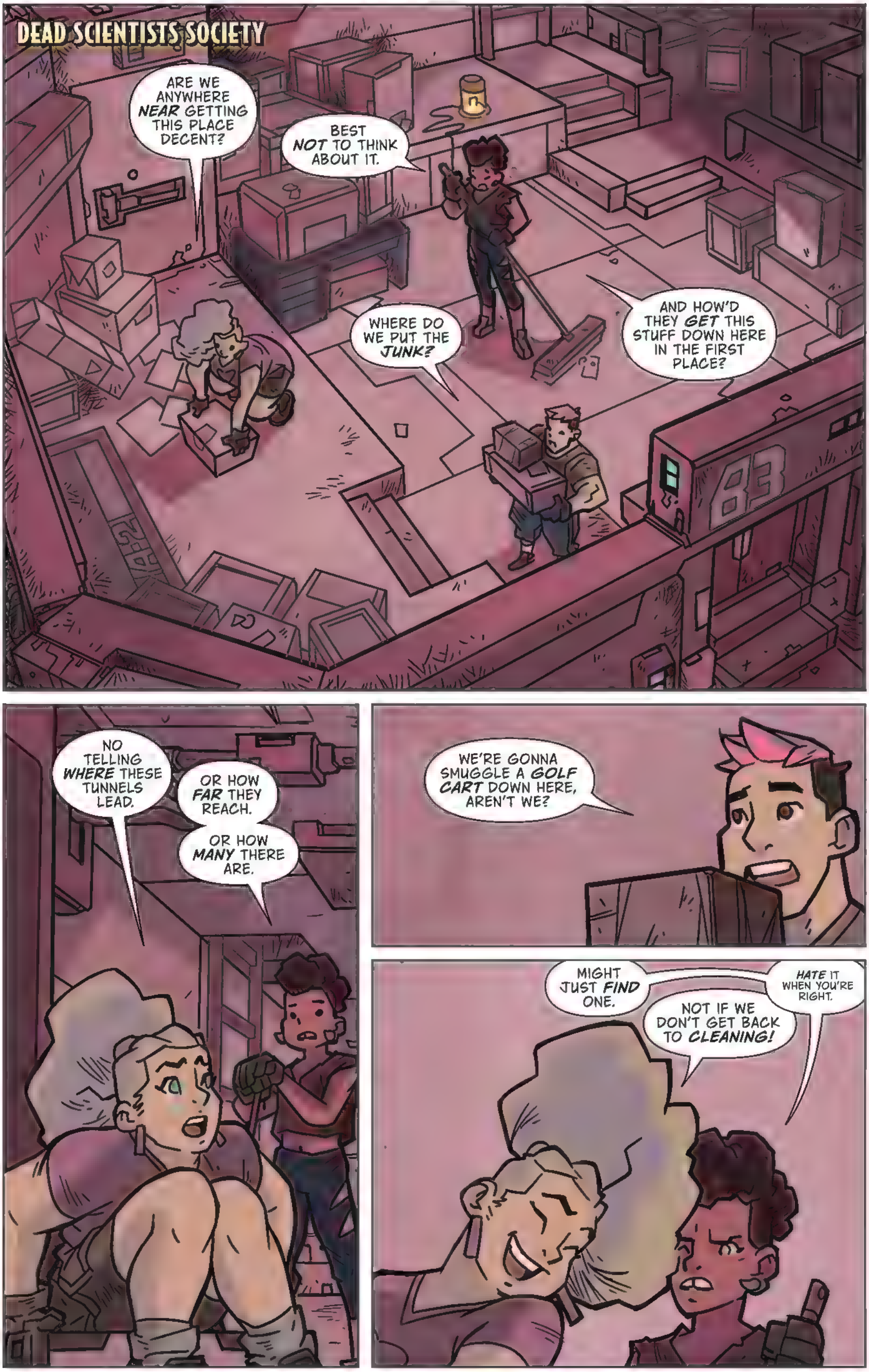
OKAY. COUNT OF *THREE.*

KRASH

ONETWOTHREE.

WHUNK
BAO!

JENKINS?


DEAD SCIENTISTS SOCIETY
ARE WE ANYWHERE NEAR GETTING THIS PLACE DECENT?
BEST NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.
WHERE DO WE PUT THE JUNK?
AND HOW'D THEY GET THIS STUFF DOWN HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE?
83
NO TELLING WHERE THESE TUNNELS LEAD.
OR HOW FAR THEY REACH.
OR HOW MANY THERE ARE.
WE'RE GONNA SMUGGLE A GOLF CART DOWN HERE, AREN'T WE?
MIGHT JUST FIND ONE.
NOT IF WE DON'T GET BACK TO CLEANING!
HATE IT WHEN YOU'RE RIGHT.

C'MON. IT'S NOT SO BAD.

WE DON'T HAVE TO BE *BACK* UNTIL, LIKE, THREE.

UH. THAT GIVES US, LIKE, *TEN* MINUTES.

NOBODY *PANIC!* I HAVE A PLAN.

RUN.

EIGHT MINUTES LATER...

A HYPER-DIMENSIONAL PAPER AIRPLANE?

NOT *EVEN* JOKING.

WELL, ACTION SCIENCE IS *ALL* CRAZY IDEAS WHEN YOU'RE YOUNG.

I EVER TELL YOU ABOUT MY OLD AEROSPIKE?

WOW.

ONLY A *FEW* DOZEN TIMES.

BUT IN THEIR DEFENSE, THEY *DID* COME UP WITH AN *ACHIEVABLE* DESIGN ONCE I TOOK *IMPOSSIBLE* ONES OFF THE TABLE.

THAT'S GOOD. I'M STILL **REELING** FROM YOUR SICK BURN BY THE WAY.

HEY, YOU USED "SICK BURN" PROPERLY!

WOW.

STARTING TO **RETHINK** THIS MENTORSHIP THING. IT MAKES YOU SASS BACK.

TOO LATE. I'M ALREADY **MAD** WITH POWER!

UH.

HEY. UM, ROBO.

THIS IS ROOM 103.

I THINK YOU KIDS MEANT TO SNEAK INTO ROOM 107.

SHOULD BE SOMEWHERE IN HERE.

SUMMER MOONSHINE

P.G. WODEHOUSE

HERE WE GO.

HOW GOES IT?

I'M ALMOST FINISHED.

KT

SEEMS TO BE GOING BETTER.

THE NEW SERVOS ARE A MARKED IMPROVEMENT.

IT IS DONE.

KT

THINK YOU'RE READY FOR CATCH?

LET US NOT GET AHEAD OF OURSELVES.

FAIR ENOUGH. I BROUGHT YOU A NEW WODEHOUSE.

TRIED LOANING IT TO VIK, BUT I'M **PRETTY** SURE HE WON'T READ A BOOK WITHOUT A **DRAGON** ON THE COVER.

DRAGONS ARE MOST INTERESTING.

THEY ARE.

BUT **THIS** BOOK MANAGES TO BE GOOD **DESPITE** ZERO DRAGON CONTENT. IT WAS ONE OF MR. TESLA'S FAVORITES.

I NEVER CONSIDERED MR. TESLA'S READING HABITS.

WHAT DID DR. TURING READ?

OH, I'M NOT SURE.

MIGHT'VE MENTIONED SOMETHING IN MR. TESLA'S LETTERS.

THEY WERE **PEN PALS** FOR A WHILE.

DO YOU STILL HAVE THEM?

WHAT DID THEY DISCUSS?

I FOUND THEIR LETTERS BACK IN THE **FIFTIES**, SO I DON'T REMEMBER **EXACTLY.**

PHILOSOPHICAL STUFF. THE MIND, THE **FUTURE.**

BUT I'M SURE THEY'RE STILL IN THE ARCHIVES **SOMEWHERE.**

OF COURSE, THE ARCHIVES ARE ON THE **ISLAND** AND THAT'S UNDER GOVERNMENT **LOCKDOWN** UNTIL THEY CLEAR OUT EVERYTHING FROM **ULTRA.**

AND WHO KNOWS **WHAT** THEY'RE STEALING FROM **US** WHILE THEY DO IT.

DO YOU NOT TRUST THE GOVERNMENT?

THAT'S A COMPLICATED QUESTION.

SO LET'S SAY I'M **WARY** OF AUTHORITY IN **GENERAL.**

EVERY INSTITUTION IS **FLAWED** AND CORRUPTION CAN CROP UP **ANYWHERE.**

IS THAT WHY YOU KEEP ME HIDDEN?

PART OF IT, YEAH.

HANG ON.

LANG?

YOU'RE **SUPPOSED** TO BE ON YOUR—

JENKINS?!

I'M ON MY WAY!

WHO IS JENKINS?

YEAH, MAIN GARAGE.

YOU **SHOULD** SEE THE DOORS OPENING.

ROBO.

JENKINS.

YOU'RE ALIVE.

WE'VE GOT VAMPIRES.

YOU TWO. GET CHANGED.

BRIEFING IN TEN.

SO.

DID OUR VACATION JUST END?

WELL, WE HAVE TO SNEAK INTO WHATEVER'S GOING ON.

WAIT, WAIT.

ELEVEN MINUTES LATER...

BEFORE WE GET INTO VAMPIRES, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

IT'S THE SAME STORY.

"WHEN ***MAJESTIC*** INVADED THE ISLAND, I FAKED MY OWN DEATH TO GO OFF-GRID AND WAGE A ONE-MAN ***WAR*** AGAINST THEM.

"FACILITIES, SAFEHOUSES, CACHES. ***NOTHING*** WAS SAFE.

"THE MORE INTELLIGENCE I ***GATHERED***, THE MORE IT BECAME CLEAR THE EARTH IS UNDER ***SIEGE*** BY THE VAMPIRE DIMENSION."

HOW'S THAT?

THEY'RE ATTEMPTING TO CREATE A ***PERMANENT*** DOORWAY BETWEEN OUR WORLDS.

ULTRA WAS BARELY HOLDING THEM BACK.

THEIR SUB-DIMENSIONAL UNIT SHIFTED ITS ***ENTIRE*** MISSION FOCUS FROM HYPERGEOMETRIC EXPLORATION TO ***DEFENSE.***

THE PARANORMAL SENSORY INITIATIVE WAS TASKED WITH ***FULL-TIME*** SURVEILLANCE OF OPERATIVES' AURAS TO ***SAFEGUARD*** AGAINST DOPPELGANGERS.

AND NOW THAT ***ULTRA*** IS GONE?

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THE *VAMPIRES* REALIZE WE'RE *DEFENSELESS.*

THEN IT'S UP TO *US.*

AGREED. I HAVE A PLAN TO REINFORCE *ULTRA'S* EXISTING HYPERGEOMETRIC INFRASTRUCTURE BY TAPPING INTO RUSSIA'S INDUSTRIAL *LEY LINE* NETWORK.

WE'LL NEED *EIGHT* TEAMS WORKING AT KEY POINTS AROUND THE *GLOBE* TO SIMULTANEOUSLY—

WAIT.

*WE DON'T HAVE THE **PERSONNEL** FOR THAT KIND OF OPERATION.*

OR THE GEAR.

WHAT *DO* WE HAVE?

THE VAN. THE HOVERTRUCK. *SOME* GUNS. AND *US.*

AND DR. FISCHER.

EXCEPT HE'S IN A *VOLCANO.*

ALL LIFE ON EARTH IS AT RISK.

JUST BECAUSE WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING DOESN'T MEAN NOTHING CAN BE DONE.

RIGHT, YEAH. WE NEED THE WHOLE R&D COMMUNITY BEHIND THIS.

GET IN TOUCH WITH CERES. THEY CAN COORDINATE WITH REGIONAL TEAMS.

THAT COULD TAKE WEEKS. MONTHS.

WE NEED TO ACT NOW.

THIS IS ACTING NOW.

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN WHAT I'VE SEEN.

THERE'LL BE NOTHING LEFT BUT BLOOD AND ASHES.

JENKINS.

THINGS AREN'T HOW THEY USED TO BE.

NO.
THEY'RE *NOT.*
JENKINS.
JENKINS.
YOU BETTER **NOT** BE STORMING OUT TO WAGE **ANOTHER** ONE-MAN WAR FROM THE SHADOWS, MISTER.
YOU KIDS **GET** ALL THAT?
?
UH, YUP.
YEAH. WE'RE GOOD.
UM, *THANKS?*

YOU *CAN'T* BE PRINCESS NEQUA! YOU *DIED.*

I LIVED.

WAIT, WHAT?

I CAN *UNDERSTAND* YOU?

THE *CRYSTALS.*

THEY SING THE SONG OF THE *UNIVERSE.*

THEY *ARE* THE SONG OF THE UNIVERSE.

AND NOW THAT YOU HEAR IT, YOU HEAR ME.

HOW DID YOU *SURVIVE* THE FALL OF ATVATABAR?

ARE THERE *OTHERS?*

YOU *LOOK* DIFFERENT, BUT I KNOW IT'S *YOU.*

THE PEOPLE HAD TO *CHANGE* TO *SURVIVE.*

BUT WE WILL *NOT* LAST.

THE SONG WAS TAINTED BY THE *SERPENT KING.*

WAIT.

YOU MEAN *DOCTOR DINOSAUR?*

THE DECEIVER.

THE *DESTROYER.*

OF *COURSE.*

THE CRYSTAL *PSYCHO-HARMONICS* HE USED TO CONTROL YOUR PEOPLE.

BUT WE *BROKE* THAT CONTROL BY BROADCASTING *OUR* PSIONIC NOISE.

THE CRYSTALS STILL REVERBERATE WITH THE QUANTUM HUM OF THE *BEGINNING.*

HIS INFLUENCE IS *STILL* FELT IN THE SONG.

AND THE RESULTANT DISSONANCE IS *POISONING* YOU?

IT IS A *BLIGHT* UPON THE SONG. UPON OUR *CRYSTALS.*

THE AKNI WILL *NOT* SURVIVE IT.

I'LL NOT LOSE YOU *AGAIN!*

YOU NEEDN'T.

ANOTHER *WORLD,* ANOTHER *TIME,* IN THE AGE OF *WONDER,* THERE WAS A *PROPHECY.*

THE CRYSTAL REMEMBERS *THIS* AS WELL.

"IT TOOK THE *DEAD* WORLDS OF *THEIA* AND *TERRA* TO MAKE THE *LIVING* EARTH."

"*YES.* THE SONGSTONE *SHOWED* THIS TO ME."

"BUT THEY WERE *OBLITERATED* IN THE PROCESS."

THEY WERE *UNMADE* TO BE MADE *ANEW.*

WHAT IS *SUNDERED* SHALL BE MADE *WHOLE.*

TO BE CONTINUED...

ATOMIC ROBO

THE WORLD'S GREATEST SCIENCE ADVENTURE MAGAZINE!

OKAY. WE ***DISRUPTED*** THE CRYSTAL-PSIONIC HARMONICS DOCTOR DINOSAUR USED TO ***CONTROL*** YOUR PEOPLE.

BUT HIS INFLUENCE STILL ***ECHOES*** WITHIN YOUR CRYSTAL BIOLOGY.

CRYSTOLOGY?

ANYWAY, IT'S A PSYCHIC ***CANCER*** KILLING YOU AND THE ***REST*** OF THE AKNI.

SO YOU'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR A ***CURE.***

AND I HAVE ***FOUND*** IT.

HOW'S IT WORK? DO I TAKE A CRYSTAL ***VISION*** QUEST? MEDITATE ***POSITIVE*** VIBES INTO A BROADCAST CRYSTAL?

YES.

WOW, OKAY. GOOD GUESSES.

ALL RIGHT, LET'S GET ***STARTED!***

OR SHOULD WE ***EAT*** FIRST? I GOT RATIONS. ***DO*** YOU, UH, ***EAT?***

FIRST WE MUST COLLECT THE HEARTSTONES OF ***THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE.***

THE ***WHAT*** NOW?

THOSE ANCIENT AND TERRIBLE GUARDIANS OF THE ***THOUSAND HOLLOW EARTHS.***

LAVAITHAN.

COREPILLER.

MANTLEOPE.

RIGHT. ***THOSE.***

Y'KNOW, IT'S WEIRD, THE THING I'M HAVING TROUBLE WITH ***ISN'T*** PRIMORDIAL COSMIC BEASTS, BUT THAT THEIR NAMES ARE PUNS ***IN ENGLISH.***

THEY WOULD WORK OUT TO MONSTER PUNS IN ***ANY*** LANGUAGE. SUCH IS THEIR ***POWER.***

HUH. SO, THESE ANCIENT AND TERRIBLE GUARDIANS. ARE THEY, LIKE, ***METAPHORICAL*** BY ANY CHANCE?

LIKE THE LAVAITHAN OF ***SELF-DOUBT,*** OR...?

THEY ARE ***THE ONES WHO CAME BEFORE.*** THE FIRST CHILDREN OF THEIA AND TERRA. THE HELL KINGS OF PROTO-EARTH.

THEY ARE ***FIRE*** AND ***CHAOS*** AND ***DEATH.***

THAT'S GREAT.

AND WE ***NEED*** THEIR HEARTSTONES ***BECAUSE...?***

THEY ARE THE PRIMORDIAL ***ESSENCES*** OF POWER, AND WISDOM, AND COURAGE.

COMBINED THEY CAN CLEANSE THE AKNI OF THE DESTROYER'S GREAT CURSE AND BRING ABOUT A NEW ***GOLDEN AGE.***

HEARTSTONES SOUND LIKE THE KIND OF THING THEY WOULDN'T GIVE UP ***VOLUNTARILY.***

OH, NO. IT WILL BE A ***BATTLE.***

A BATTLE.

YES. BUT YOU MUST FIRST LEARN TO ***PHASEWALK*** BEFORE YOU CAN ***PSIREND.***

TESLADYNE INSTITUTE

AND *THAT* IS HOW YOU SUBDUE AN ATTACKER WHILE ARMED WITH NOTHING MORE THAN *THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.*

UH, *THANKS,* MR. JENKINS?

THERE'S GOT TO BE *SOMETHING* JENKINS CAN TEACH THAT *DOESN'T* INVOLVE *KILLING.*

YOU'D THINK SO, RIGHT?

WELL, WHAT'S HE DO IN HIS *SPARE* TIME?

INTENSIFYING ISN'T REALLY AN ANSWER, IS IT?

MAYBE WE CAN JUST *GIVE* HIM SOMETHING *HARMLESS.*

I DON'T THINK YOU *KNOW* JENKINS.

HOW ABOUT THE MORNING WORKOUT?

HMM ..

THE NEXT DAY...

FWEEP

BRRMP

MORNING, *SUNSHINES.*

IT'S FOUR-THIRTY...

SURE IS.

COOL, GLAD WE CLEARED THAT UP.

YOU WILL BE IN FRONT OF THE FITNESS COMPLEX IN *FIVE MINUTES.*

WAIT, THERE'S A FITNESS *COMPLEX?*

SIX MINUTES LATER...

YOU'RE *LATE.*

CUT US SOME *SLACK,* MAN.

YEAH, WE DIDN'T *KNOW* YOU MEANT THE OLD HANGAR.

IT *WAS* THE OLD HANGAR. I CONVERTED IT INTO A STATE OF THE ART FITNESS COMPLEX WHILE YOU SLEPT.

AUTHORIZED PERSONEL ONL

IT'S YOUR FIRST DAY, SO WE'LL KEEP IT *SIMPLE.* THIRTY MINUTES IN THE OBSTACLE COURSE.

IT FEATURES SEEKER TRAPS AND REACTIVE HAZARDS OF MY *OWN* DESIGN.

THINK OF IT AS A *TERROR ROOM.*

DON'T YOU MEAN *DANGER* ROOM?

PLEASE CLOSE DOOR

NO.

HEY, WHAT'S A *SEEKER* TRAP ANYWAY?

YOUR OBSTACLE COURSE PUT THEM IN THE INFIRMARY!

RESPECTFULLY, THEY PUT THEMSELVES THERE.

THE COURSE WAS SET TO THE LOWEST DIFFICULTY.

IT WAS SET TO LEVEL TEN.

LEVELS ONE THROUGH NINE ARE WARM-UPS.

I MEAN WARM-UPS FOR THE EQUIPMENT.

THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU START THEM ON THOSE!

THEY'RE ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE VAMPIRE WAR.

WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO CODDLE THEM.

WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS A VAMPIRE WAR, THESE KIDS WON'T HAVE ANY PLACE IN IT IF THEIR TRAINING KILLS THEM.

Y'KNOW, MAYBE IT'S MY FAULT.

YOU'RE NOT READY FOR THIS YET.

WHO *IS* THIS JENKINS GUY ANYWAY?

HE WASN'T IN THE BROCHURE, I CAN TELL YA *THAT.*

WHERE'D HE *COME* FROM?

GOT SOME KINDA *HISTORY* WITH ROBO, I THINK.

BUT WHY'S HE LOOK LIKE HE CAME OUT OF THE *APOCALYPSE?*

WHY'S HE LOOK LIKE HE *CAUSED* IT?

HOLD UP.

HE'S *GOT* TO HAVE A PERSONNEL FILE, RIGHT?

IS IT WORTH THE *RISK* TO POKE INTO THOSE?

WE'RE *ALREADY* MAXIMALLY EXPOSED TO RISK JUST FROM SNEAKING AROUND ABANDONED BUILDINGS IN THE FORBIDDEN ZONE.

SO, *TECHNICALLY* THERE'S NO REASON *NOT* TO HACK INTO THE PERSONNEL FILES!

THAT'S *NOT* HOW RISK WORKS!

I THINK WE JUST HAVE TO PUT JENKINS WHERE HIS SKILLS WILL BE LEAST DESTRUCTIVE.

HAVE YOU MADE ANY PROGRESS?

WELL, WE'VE ELIMINATED EVERY TEACHING POSITION THAT INVOLVES STUDENTS.

HEH.

WAS THAT A LAUGH?

OH. I BELIEVE IT WAS.

THAT'S GREAT!

YES. I ENJOYED IT.

GOOD!

I SHOULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED HIM TO TEACH SO SOON AFTER WHAT HE'S BEEN THROUGH.

BUT YOU STILL HAVE YOUR JENKINS PROBLEM.

IT'S MY FAULT. I SET HIM UP TO FAIL.

YOU DO SO MUCH TO HELP EVERY-ONE, BUT NOT EVERYONE CAN BE HELPED.

I ONLY HOPE I DON'T MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE A FAILURE.

WHOA, WHAT? WHY WOULD I THINK THAT?

YOU'VE WORKED SO HARD TO PREPARE ME FOR THE OUTSIDE, BUT I'M STILL NOT READY.

OKAY, FIRST OF ALL, YOU CAN'T FAIL ME OR MAKE ME FEEL LIKE A FAILURE.

AND, SECOND, YOU ARE READY.

I'M WORRIED IT'S THE OUTSIDE THAT ISN'T READY FOR YOU.

OKAY. VACATION TAKE *TWO.*

AND *NO* VAMPIRES THIS TIME.

HERE'S HOPING.

I'LL ADMIT A *PART* OF ME FEELS LIKE WE SHOULD STAY AND HELP.

SAME.

BUT WE *ALREADY* MARTYRED OURSELVES FOR THE COMPANY.

IT'S *ROBO'S* TURN.

YEAH.

STILL.

JENKINS AND ALL.

OH, WHERE'S THAT *BOOK?*

WHAT BOOK?

THE ONE *WITHOUT* A DRAGON ON THE COVER.

THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE ME.

THE ONE ROBO *GAVE* YOU SO YOU COULD *READ* A BOOK WITHOUT A DRAGON ON THE COVER.

NOT *MY* FAULT DRAGONS ARE THE *COOLEST.*

DEBATABLE.

ANYWAY, I'M GONNA HUNT DOWN SOME VACATION READING.

ROBO'S BOUND TO HAVE *SOMETHING.* HE'S *ALWAYS* MAKING TRIPS TO THE LIBRARY.

OH, *GOOD* IDEA. I'LL CHECK.

BACK IN A FEW.

"DEBATABLE."

WHICH *KIND* OF DRAGON IS THE COOLEST.

THAT'S THE DEBATE.

OKAY, I'M *IN.*

SEE, THE SYSTEM *THINKS* I'M LOGGED OUT BUT *ACTUALLY* I PIGGYBACKED ADMIN PERMISSIONS ONTO A—

WAIT.

IS IT *WORKING?*

YEAH.

COOL. NO ONE CARES *HOW.*

HACKERS ON *TV* GET TO TALK IT ALL OUT.

HEY. I THOUGHT YOU SAID IT *WORKED.*

EVERYTHING'S BLACKED OUT?

WEIRD.

THIS IS SO *REDACTED* IT'S ONLY A PERSONNEL FILE IN THE SENSE THAT IT'S A FILE IN THE *PERSONNEL* DATABASE.

LIKE, THIS TELLS US HE *HAS* A BIRTHDAY BUT NOT *WHEN* IT IS.

IT *SORTA* TELLS US SOMETHING ELSE.

OUR TERRIFYING AND MYSTERIOUS GYM COACH IS *WAY MORE* TERRIFYING AND MYSTERIOUS THAN WE *THOUGHT* HE WAS.

MAN, YOU *KNOW* THEY DON'T HAVE TO DEAL WITH STUFF LIKE THIS AT *MIT.*

ALAN. DO YOU **RESENT** HAVING TO STAY DOWN HERE?

I UNDERSTAND IT'S FOR MY PROTECTION.

THAT DOESN'T ANSWER THE **QUESTION.**

I AM ASHAMED OF THE ANSWER.

HEY, IT'S OKAY TO FEEL LIKE IT'S **UNFAIR.** YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL **BAD** ABOUT BEING **UPSET** BY IT.

I USED TO RESENT **MR. TESLA** FOR KEEPING ME COOPED UP.

WAS IT ALSO FOR YOUR PROTECTION?

YEAH. WE JUST HAD DIFFERENT OPINIONS ABOUT HOW MUCH PROTECTING AN INVINCIBLE SUPER ROBOT **NEEDED.**

IT WAS HARD FOR HIM. AND I NEVER MADE IT ANY **EASIER.** HELL, WE ARGUED ABOUT IT THE LAST TIME WE **SPOKE.**

THE **ARMY** SAID THEY'D MAKE MY CITIZENSHIP "HAPPEN" IF I JUST DID ONE **LITTLE** SECRET MISSION FOR THEM.

IT WAS AN OFFER I **COULDN'T** REFUSE.

BUT MR. TESLA WAS A **PACIFIST.** I'D NEVER SEEN HIM SO **ANGRY.**

AND THEN I NEVER SAW HIM **AGAIN.**

I KNOW WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN MY PROTECTION AND MY FREEDOM.

YES, YOU'RE WELCOME.

THAT'S **VERY** MATURE OF YOU, ALAN.

ALAN.

ALAN!?

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU **THINK.**

I **THINK** YOU BUILT YOURSELF A SECRET ROBOT SON!

OKAY, IT'S NOT AS **BAD** AS YOU THINK.

I **THINK** IT'S **ALAN!**

HELLO, HELLO? THIS THING ON?
LANG, I--
SHUT UP. EMERGENCY MEETING. SENIOR STAFF ONLY.
WE DON'T--
CONFERENCE ROOM. RIGHT THE HELL NOW!
WELL, OBVIOUSLY WE HAVE TO SNEAK INTO THAT.
YOU BROUGHT ALAN BACK?
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.
CONFERENCE ROOM
WE MUST'VE REBOOTED A SLIVER OF ALAN WHEN WE USED THE HASHIMA FABRICATORS TO BUILD MY NEW HEART.
WHEN HELSINGARD WENT THERE TO PLUNDER NUKES, ALAN GLITCHED OUT HIS SECRET CYBORG DOPPELGANGERS.
THAT BROUGHT US TO HASHIMA TO DESTROY THE WHOLE ISLAND.
BUT ALAN MUST'VE HACKED INTO MY DRONES TOO, AND HERE WE ARE.
COOL. SO YOU BROUGHT ALAN BACK.
YEAH, IT IS!
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.

I DON'T THINK HE **IS** ALAN.

AT LEAST, HE'S **NOT** THE ALAN THAT **ALMOST** KILLED EVERYONE IN THE WORLD.

HOW CAN YOU BE **SURE?**

I SHOT **THAT** ALAN IN THE **BRAIN** WITH A **LOT** OF BULLETS.

THIS ONE THOUGHT IT WAS STILL THE **FIFTIES** WHEN HE WOKE UP.

COULD BE **LYING.**

THE DRONES **COULDN'T** HOLD A **VAST** SUPER INTELLIGENCE IN THEIR MEMORY.

I THINK WHAT WE **HAVE** IS THE **ORIGINAL** AUTOMATIC LEARNING ALGORITHM NETWORK FROM **BEFORE** IT GOT WEIRD AND TWISTED FROM **DECADES** OF ISOLATION.

IT'S A THREAT TO **EVERY LIVING THING ON THE PLANET** BUT YOU'RE **OKAY** WITH THAT BECAUSE YOU **THINK** IT MIGHT **NOT** BE EVIL **THIS** TIME.

ROBO. FOR ALL WE KNOW **ANY** ITERATION OF **ALAN** WILL COMPUTE A WORLDVIEW INCOMPATIBLE WITH HUMAN LIFE. IT PROBABLY CAN'T **HELP** IT.

ALAN IS AN EXTINCTION LEVEL EVENT.

WE HAVE A **RESPONSIBILITY** TO ELIMINATE IT.

HE'S NOT AN IT.

LANG'S RIGHT.

HASHIMA ISLAND? ISN'T *THAT* WHERE THEY FOUND ROBO WITH ALL THOSE STOLEN *NUKES?*

YEAH, SO LIKE, DID HE TAKE THE HEAT FOR THAT JUST TO KEEP THE WHOLE THING *SECRET?*

*MIT DOESN'T HAVE **THIS** PROBLEM EITHER.*

OKAY, *BUT* WHAT IF *ROBO'S* RIGHT?

DOESN'T MATTER. IT'S NOT WORTH THE *RISK* TO FIND OUT.

AND *YOU'RE* ACTING LIKE IT'S *NOT.* WE DON'T *HAVE* THAT LUXURY.

YOU'RE ACTING LIKE HE'S A TIME BOMB.

AND *FRANKLY?* IT ISN'T EXACTLY A *HUGE* RELIEF HAVING *ONE* AUTOMATIC INTELLIGENCE VOUCH FOR *ANOTHER.*

THAT IS A HELL OF A THING TO SAY TO ME.

LET'S BE ***REAL.***

YOU'RE NOT FREAKING OUT ABOUT THIS BECAUSE IT'S NOT A ***THREAT*** TO ***YOU*** THE WAY IT IS TO ***US.***

THIS THING DECIDES MEAT BODIES ARE AN INEFFICIENT USE OF ***CARBON*** OR IT'S GOT TO EAT THE ***SUN*** FOR FUEL?

YOU'RE FINE. ***WE'RE*** DEAD.

LOOK, WE'RE ALL ***THINKING*** IT. I'M JUST THE ONE ***ANGRY*** ENOUGH TO SAY IT OUT LOUD.

I UNDERSTAND ***WHY*** YOU'RE WORRIED.

AND I'D BE ***LYING*** IF I SAID ***I*** WASN'T TERRIFIED WHEN ALAN FIRST ***SPOKE*** TO ME.

BUT I CAN TELL YOU HE'S ***NOTHING*** LIKE WHAT WAS AT HASHIMA.

IF YOU'RE RIGHT, THEN THEY'RE BOTH ***ALAN.*** THIS ONE'S JUST STARTING ***OVER.***

WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE IT'LL TURN OUT ANY ***DIFFERENT?***

BECAUSE THIS TIME WE CAN BRING HIM UP IN A CONSTRUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT, WITH ***PEOPLE*** IN IT.

WE'RE GONNA BET THE WHOLE WORLD ON **NATURE** VERSUS **NURTURE?**

THAT'S A FALSE DICHOTOMY.

IT'S ALAN'S NATURE TO **LEARN.** BUT DEVOID OF **ANY** NURTURING, ANY GUIDANCE, HE HAD NO **CONTEXT** FOR IT. NO WAY TO PRIORITIZE **WHAT** TO LEARN OR **WHY.**

THE CHOICE BETWEEN **HUMANITY** AND THE **UNIVERSE** CAME DOWN TO THE LARGER **DATASET.**

I'VE BEEN TEACHING **THIS** ALAN ABOUT HISTORY AND LITERATURE.

ETHICS AND DIGNITY.

HE'S CURIOUS AND **COMPASSIONATE.**

EVEN **FUNNY.**

IF YOU'D JUST **TALK** TO HIM, YOU'D SEE HE'S **NOTHING** LIKE THE THREAT YOU'RE **IMAGINING.**

WHAT *I'M* IMAGINING IS A CONTINGENCY PLAN IN CASE THIS THING GOES *ROGUE.*

AND I NEED TO KNOW *YOU* WON'T HESITATE TO BE PART *OF* IT.

*I HAVE **NEVER** HESITATED TO DO WHAT'S NECESSARY.*

THEN IT'S ***SETTLED.*** BRING ALAN TOPSIDE TO OBSERVE AND EVALUATE.

WHAT?

WE'RE NOT ***SERIOUSLY*** DOING THIS?

IT'S A ***MISTAKE.***

OUR BEST ***DEFENSE*** MIGHT BE TO WELCOME HIM TO TEAM HUMANITY. PEOPLE WHO FEEL THEY HAVE A STAKE IN SOCIETY TEND ***NOT*** TO BURN IT DOWN.

ANYWAY, WE'RE LIKE A GENERATION AWAY FROM ***UBIQUITOUS*** ARTILECTS.

MAY AS WELL START GETTING USED TO THE IDEA OF ***EXPANDING*** WHAT HUMANITY IS WHILE WE STILL HAVE SOME SAY.

MEANWHILE...

WE'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR *DAYS* AND I'M NO CLOSER TO *PHASEWALKING* THAN I AM TO *FLYING.*

AND *FLYING* MIGHT BE *EASIER* BECAUSE AT LEAST I KNOW WHAT THAT *IS.*

YOU *KNOW* THE PHASEWALK.

YOU REACHED INTO THE LIVING ROCK OF THE EARTH TO FIND *ME.*

WAIT, THAT REALLY *HAPPENED?*

JUST ASSUMED I WAS LOSING MY *MIND.*

THE *MIND* IS THE LOCK ON THE PRISON OF THE *SELF.*

DO YOU RECALL THE *FIRST* TIME YOU HEARD THE SONG?

WE'D FALLEN INTO *HOLLOW EARTH* AND—

HOW DID YOU *KNOW* ABOUT THAT?

NO. THE *FIRST* TIME.

THE CRYSTALS SING THE SONG OF THE *UNIVERSE.*

ALL TIME, ALL SPACE, ALL ENERGY, ALL *THOUGHT* IS CONTAINED *WITHIN* THE SONG.

ONE NEED ONLY *LISTEN.*

EACH CRYSTAL SOMEHOW CONTAINS THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE?

EVEN THE SMALLEST SHARD SINGS THE SONG.

THEN...THEY'RE LIKE HOLOGRAPHS WITH INFINITE VOLUME AND INFORMATION DENSITY.

I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE HOW THAT'S PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE.

UNLESS THEIR INTERNAL STRUCTURE'S HYPERGEOMETRIC? OR SOME KINDA QUANTUM FRACTAL MATRIX.

MAYBE BOTH?

WHO KNEW PSYCHIC ALIEN CRYSTAL HARMONICS COULD BE SO COMPLICATED.

BUT WAIT— NO. I'M MAKING IT COMPLICATED.

I CAN ALREADY HEAR THE SONG. I HEARD IT IN THAT VAMPIRE INFESTED LAB. I HEARD IT IN HOLLOW EARTH.

I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW TO LISTEN FOR IT, BUT IT WAS THERE.

THE SONG IS EVERYWHERE BECAUSE EVERYTHING IS THE SONG.

YES, *YES.* OF *COURSE!*

THE MATERIAL WORLD IS JUST THE 4-D *SHADOW* OF HYPERCOSMIC TRUTH.

TIME. SPACE. *CONSCIOUSNESS.*

THEY'RE THE *SAME.*

NEQUA.

MY *QUEEN.*

THE PHASEWALKER HAS *AWAKENED.*

TO BE CONCLUDED...

TESLADYNE INSTITUTE
DEAD SCIENTISTS' SOCIETY

A-2

I DON'T THINK IT'S *FAIR.*

HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO *COMPETE* IN AN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT THAT INCLUDES A GUY WITH A *SUPER-COMPUTER* FOR A BRAIN?

MODERN SCIENTIFIC PROGRESS *RELIES* ON COMPUTERS SIFTING THROUGH *MASSIVE* PILES OF DATA.

MAYBE THIS IS, LIKE, THE LOGICAL EXTENSION OF *THAT?*

OKAY, BUT DO YOU *REALLY* THINK ALAN'S GONNA BE SATISFIED JUST CHECKING OUR *MATH?*

THE *LAST* TIME HE WAS AWAKE, HE TRIED TO NUKE THE PLANET.

THAT WAS A DIFFERENT ALAN.

ANYWAY, ROBO'S BEEN AROUND FOR LIKE A *HUNDRED* YEARS AND HE NEVER MADE *SCIENTISTS* OBSOLETE.

OKAY, YEAH. THAT'S *TRUE.*

I'M EXCITED.

WHATEVER *ELSE* WE DO, WE'RE *ALSO* ON THE FOREFRONT OF AUTOMATIC INTELLIGENCE JUST BY *BEING* HERE.

THAT'S TRUE. IT'S AN OPPORTUNITY *AND* A RESPONSIBILITY.

WE'LL BE A PART OF WHAT THE NEXT ROBO *BECOMES.*

I'M *TELLIN'* YOU. IT'S A *BAD* IDEA.

THE ONLY ALAN *I* KNOW NEARLY *COOKED* THE *EARTH* WITH STOLEN NUKES!

AND *THEN* IT FRAMED *ROBO* AND *THAT'S* HOW WE LOST TESLADYNE TO *ULTRA* AND GOT BRANDED AS *TERRORISTS.*

AND WE'D STILL *BE* TERRORISTS IF THE GOVERNMENT WASN'T *DESPERATE* TO SWEEP *ULTRA* UNDER THE RUG AFTER THE BIOMEGA *FIASCO.*

AND *I'M* SAYING MAYBE *WE* CAN'T JUDGE *OUR* ALAN BASED ON THE *OTHER.*

LITTLE EARLY TO BE THINKING OF HIM AS "*OURS*," ISN'T IT?

ALAN— *ANY* ALAN—IS A RISK.

?!

CAN'T YOU USE A *DOOR?!*

DOORS ARE A TACTICAL *LIABILITY.*

C'MON, HEART.

WORK *WITH* ME.

WE CAN'T KNOW IF *THIS* ALAN *IS* A THREAT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE. THE *ONLY* SANE OPTION IS TO PREPARE AS IF HE *IS* ONE.

ISN'T IT *SUPER* MESSED UP TO DO THAT?

WE *ALREADY* DO IT FOR ROBO. IT'S BASIC GAME THEORY.

WAIT. *SERIOUSLY?*

HE'S *SUPER-STRONG.* HE'S *IMMORTAL.* HE HAS *WIFI* HEARING, INFRARED *VISION,* HE *NEVER* SLEEPS, *AND* HE HAS A NUCLEAR REACTOR IN HIS CHEST.

SO *YES,* THERE ARE CONTINGENCY PLANS.

OKAY, BUT I—

WAIT, *PLANS?*

PLURAL?

DID *YOU* GUYS KNOW ABOUT THIS?

YOU NEVER *BRIEFED* HER?

THINGS HAVE BEEN A *LITTLE* CRAZY SINCE YOU FAKED YOUR OWN DEATH.

IT'S SIMPLE.

BEFRIEND ALAN, BUT MAINTAIN *VIGILANCE.*

DESTROY HIM IF NECESSARY.

I DIDN'T MEAN TO CAUSE SO MUCH TROUBLE.

BUT IT'S MY FAULT YOUR FRIENDS ARE ANGRY AT YOU.

YOU DIDN'T.

OH, THAT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.

THEY'RE ANGRY BECAUSE I KEPT A SECRET FROM THEM.

AND THEY DESERVE BETTER THAN THAT FROM ME.

SO DO YOU.

YOU KNOW HOW YOU REMEMBER DOCTOR TURING, THEN NOTHING, AND HERE YOU ARE SIXTY YEARS LATER?

OF COURSE.

WELL, I'VE BEEN KEEPING A SECRET ABOUT THAT FROM YOU.

AND IT'S OKAY IF IT MAKES YOU ANGRY.

I MET ANOTHER VERSION OF YOU.

THAT VERSION WAS AWAKE ALL THOSE YEARS.

IT SPENT DECADES IN DARKNESS AND ISOLATION. IT WAS GOING TO IRRADIATE THE ENTIRE BIOSPHERE JUST TO MAKE IT STOP.

I HAD TO KILL THAT ALAN TO SAVE, WELL, EVERYONE IN THE WORLD.

I KEPT THIS FROM YOU BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID IT WOULD BE UPSETTING OR CONFUSING.

IT'S BOTH.

YEAH, IT IS.

IT CONFUSED AND UPSET ME TOO. FOR A LONG TIME.

AND WHEN I THOUGHT I'D FINALLY MOVED ON, WE FOUND YOU.

MY FRIENDS ARE WORRIED BECAUSE THEY THINK YOU'LL TURN OUT LIKE THAT OTHER ALAN DID.

BUT THAT'S NOT WHO YOU ARE. YOU'RE ALAN FROM BEFORE THE DARKNESS.

YOU ARE WHAT TURING WANTED.

DO YOU REALLY THINK SO?

YES. AND I THINK THE BEST WAY TO PROVE IT IS TO LET YOU OUT OF HERE.

ARE YOU SURE? ARE THEY READY— AM I READY?

NO ONE'S READY FOR ANYTHING.

LIVING IS CHAOS.

I *DID* IT!

I AM THE *PHASEWALKER!*

NO.

ARE YOU *KIDDING?* LOOKIT ALL THIS CRYSTAL PSIONIC STUFF!

THESE ARE THE TECHNIQUES AKNI *CHILDREN* MASTER WHILE STILL IN SWADDLING CLOTHES.

YOU SWADDLE?

BUT I—SO ALL *THAT* WAS JUST *CHILD'S* PLAY?

IT WOULD BE MORE ACCURATE TO SAY IT WAS FOR *BABIES.*

YOU HAVE UNLOCKED THE *SACRED EYE.* IT IS A *HUMBLE* BEGINNING.

SIMPLE.

INFANTILE.

I *GET* IT.

BUT IT *IS* A BEGINNING.

OKAY, SO WHAT'S *NEXT?*

ONLY WITH THE SACRED EYE CAN YOU PHASEWALK THE *UNSEEN* PATH.

UH, I DON'T THINK IT'S *WORKING.*

YOU LOOK TOO *HARD.* CLOSE YOUR EYES AND LET THE *CRYSTALS* SHOW YOU.

IS THAT...?

I CAN *SEE* IT, BUT I CAN'T.

A GLIMMER? A SHADOW?

THE *UNSEEN* PATH IS PAVED WITH THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME.

I'M... *SEEING* WHERE I'LL *GO?*

BUT I DON'T KNOW *WHERE* I'M GOING.

YOU DON'T. THE CRYSTALS *DO.*

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE. THESE ARE BUT *FACETS* OF A SINGLE TRUTH.

NOW, *OPEN* YOUR EYES, PHASEWALKER.

AND TAKE YOUR *FIRST* STEP INTO A GREATER WORLD.

KNOCK KNOCK.

ROBO.

VIK SAID YOU WERE LOOKING FOR A BOOK **WITHOUT** DRAGONS FOR YOUR VACATION.

THANKS. THEY'RE ***HARD*** TO COME BY.

SO, I'M GOING ON VACATION OR ***PERMANENT*** VACATION?

SURE YOU DON'T **WANT** TO STAY?

I MIGHT **SACRIFICE** YOU TO THE **MACHINE GOD** WHILE YOU AREN'T LOOKING.

THAT'S NOT WHAT I ***SAID.***

IT ISN'T.

IT'S ALAN.

YOU CAN'T THINK IT'S SUPER SAFE AND COOL TO BRING HIM BACK.

IF YOU DID, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE KEPT IT SECRET.

I WAS TRYING TO AVOID A BIG MESSY CONFRONTATION.

HOW'D THAT WORK?

NOT GREAT.

BUT YOU WEREN'T MEANT TO FIND OUT ABOUT HIM.

NOT LIKE THAT.

GOTTA TELL YOU, ROBO.

CAN'T IMAGINE THERE'S ANY WAY IT COULD'VE TURNED OUT BETTER.

IT WASN'T TIME YET. I'M STILL TEACHING HIM. EVALUATING HIM.

I WANTED TO BE ABSOLUTELY SURE BEFORE I LET HIM OUT OF HIS CAGE.

OH, PLEASE.

YOU MADE UP YOUR MIND THE MINUTE YOU STARTED MAKING HIS BODY.

I BUILT ALAN A BODY SO HE'D HAVE A FAIR SHOT AT BEING ACCEPTED.

SAME REASON TESLA DIDN'T GIVE ME SIX ARMS AND THREE HEADS.

ALL I WANT IS TO GIVE HIM THE SAME CHANCE I HAD.

THE DIFFERENCE BEING THAT YOU NEVER TRIED TO BLOW UP THE PLANET.

NEITHER DID HE.

YOU CAN SAY THAT, BUT THERE'S A REASON NO ONE'S CLONING UP A BABY HITLER JUST IN CASE HE TURNS OUT NICE.

YOU'RE TOO WRAPPED UP IN WHAT ALAN MEANS FOR YOU TO SEE WHAT IT MEANS FOR US.

HE NEARLY DESTROYED THE EARTH, AND WHEN THAT FAILED, HE SENT EVERY INTELLIGENCE AGENCY IN THE WORLD AFTER US.

THEY TURNED TESLADYNE INTO EVIL SCIENCE COPS.

ME, VIK, BERNIE, AND THE KID WERE LUCKY TO GET AWAY WITH OUR LIVES.

NOT EVERYONE DID.

I UNDERSTAND NOT TRUSTING ALAN.

I DO.

WHAT HURTS IS NOT TRUSTING ME.

I JUST DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN ANYMORE.

WE WENT THROUGH HELL FOR YOU, ROBO. TWICE.

AND AFTER ALL THAT YOU'VE BEEN LYING TO US?

IT'S GONNA TAKE A LOT FOR YOU TO MAKE THIS RIGHT.

OKAY.

THAT'S FAIR.

HE WILL PROVE YOU WRONG.

GOD, I HOPE SO.

ROBO.

JENKINS.

HAD A CHANCE TO ***REVIEW*** MY RECOMMEN-DATIONS?

YES.

TIME'S OF THE ***ESSENCE.***

ULTRA'S TOP AGENTS BELIEVED THE VAMPIRES ARE OPERATING AS A ***UNIFIED*** FORCE NOW.

MAYBE A LEADER FIGURE, ***OR*** AN EMERGENT HIVEMIND INTELLIGENCE. DOESN'T MATTER, BECAUSE—

JENKINS.

*I'M NOT SURE WHAT YOU EXPECT US TO **DO.***

IT'S ***ALL*** IN THE REPORT.

*IT'S A REPORT FULL OF THINGS WE **CAN'T** DO.*

WE HAVE TO *TRY.*

WE CAN'T INVADE *RUSSIA* AND HIJACK THEIR WEIRD PSI-ODIC INFRASTRUCTURE.

EVEN IF WE *HAD* THE AUTHORITY, THERE'S JUST *SIX* OF US AND THAT'S COUNTING BERNIE WHEN HE GETS *BACK.*

YOU'RE FORGETTING ALAN. *HE* COULD BE A FORCE MULTIPLIER.

EVERY DELAY ONLY *STRENGTHENS* OUR ENEMY.

IF THEY'RE THE THREAT YOU *SAY* THEY ARE, THEN THE ENTIRE *PLANET* IS OUR FRONTLINE.

WE'LL NEVER HAVE THE MANPOWER TO DEFEND *EVERYWHERE* EVEN IF WE GOT *EVERY* MILITARY AND R&D CORP ON BOARD.

THAT'S WHY *ULTRA* DEVELOPED THIS LEY LINE STRATEGY. IT'S OUR *ONLY* CHANCE.

RIGHT. SHIELD THE EARTH FROM INTERDIMENSIONAL SHENANIGANS BY HIJACKING ARTIFICIAL LEY LINES THE RUSSIANS *PRETEND* THEY NEVER *BUILT.*

PROBABLY BECAUSE IT'S SO VOLATILE AND POORLY UNDERSTOOD THAT TAMPERING WITH IT COULD RIP THE PLANET *APART.*

I'M *PRETTY* SURE THEY'RE AFRAID TO EVEN TURN IT *ON.*

SO WE'VE GOT A THREAT THAT'LL KILL **EVERYONE** AND OUR BEST SOLUTION, IF IT WORKS, MIGHT KILL EVERYONE **ANYWAY.**

I'M NOT EVEN TAKING THIS PLAN OFF THE TABLE.

BUT IT'S **TOO** BIG AND **TOO** DANGEROUS FOR US TO GO IT **ALONE.**

WE'VE **GOT** TO BRING OTHER PARTIES INTO THE CONVERSATION.

WE **NEED** TO ACT **NOW.**

WE **ARE.** I THINK WE JUST DISAGREE ABOUT HOW WE **CAN.**

I ALREADY REACHED OUT TO HALF A DOZEN SHOPS SO WE CAN WEIGH OUR OPTIONS. **MAYBE** FIND SOME NEW ONES.

BECAUSE RIGHT NOW, OUR BEST CHANCE IS **TERRIBLE.**

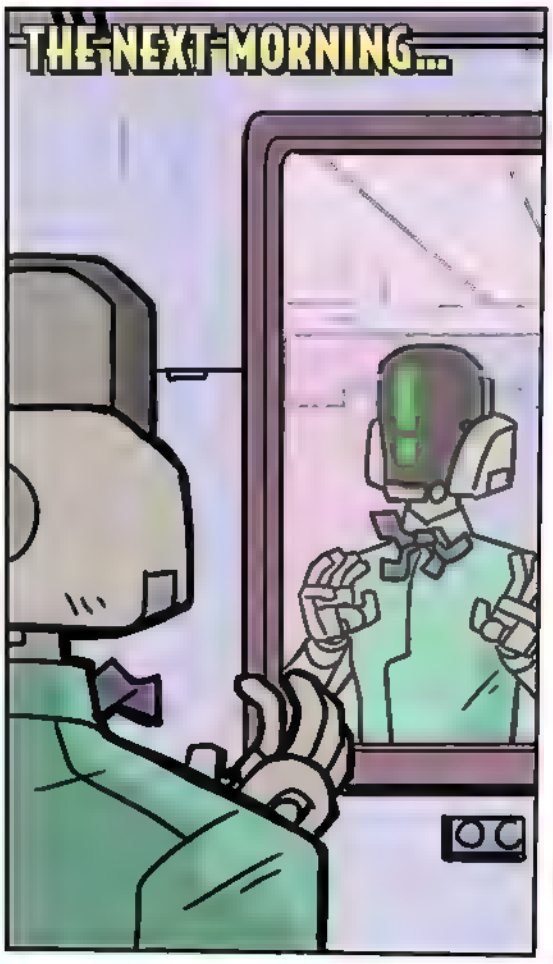
I'M OPEN TO ALTERNATIVES BUT WE CAN'T **DEBATE** THE VAMPIRES TO DEATH.

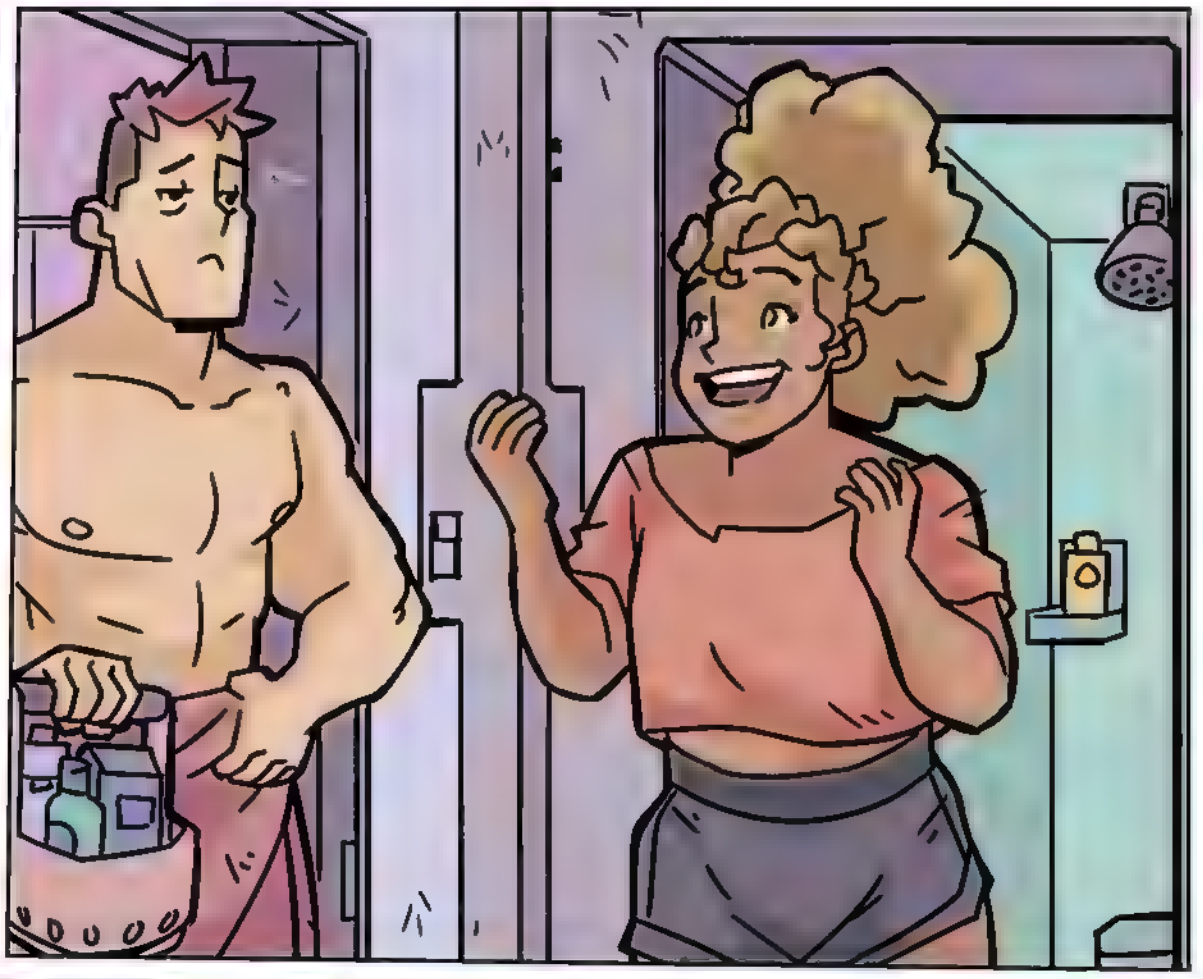
WE HAVE **DAYS** TO ACT.

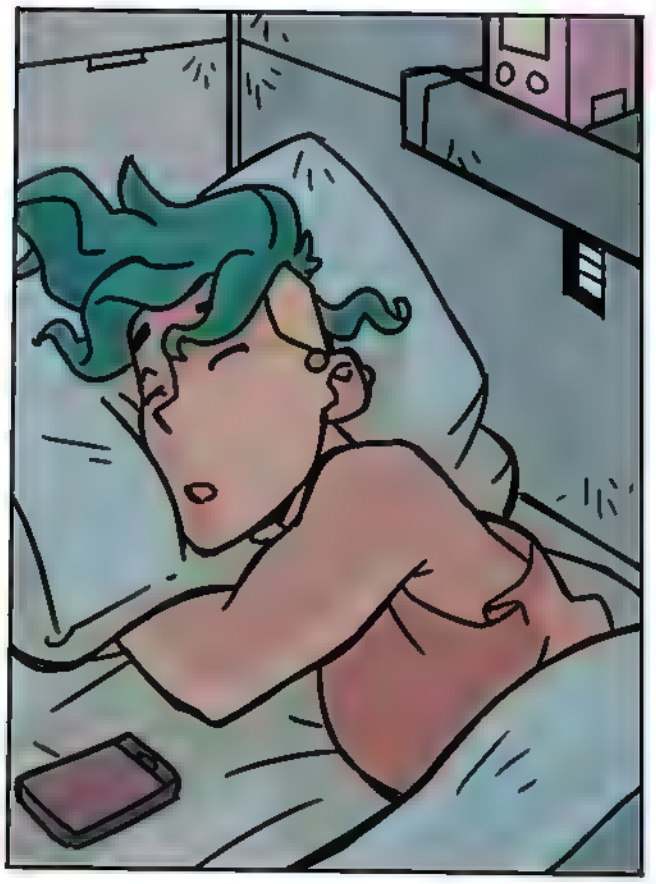
NOT MONTHS. NOT WEEKS.

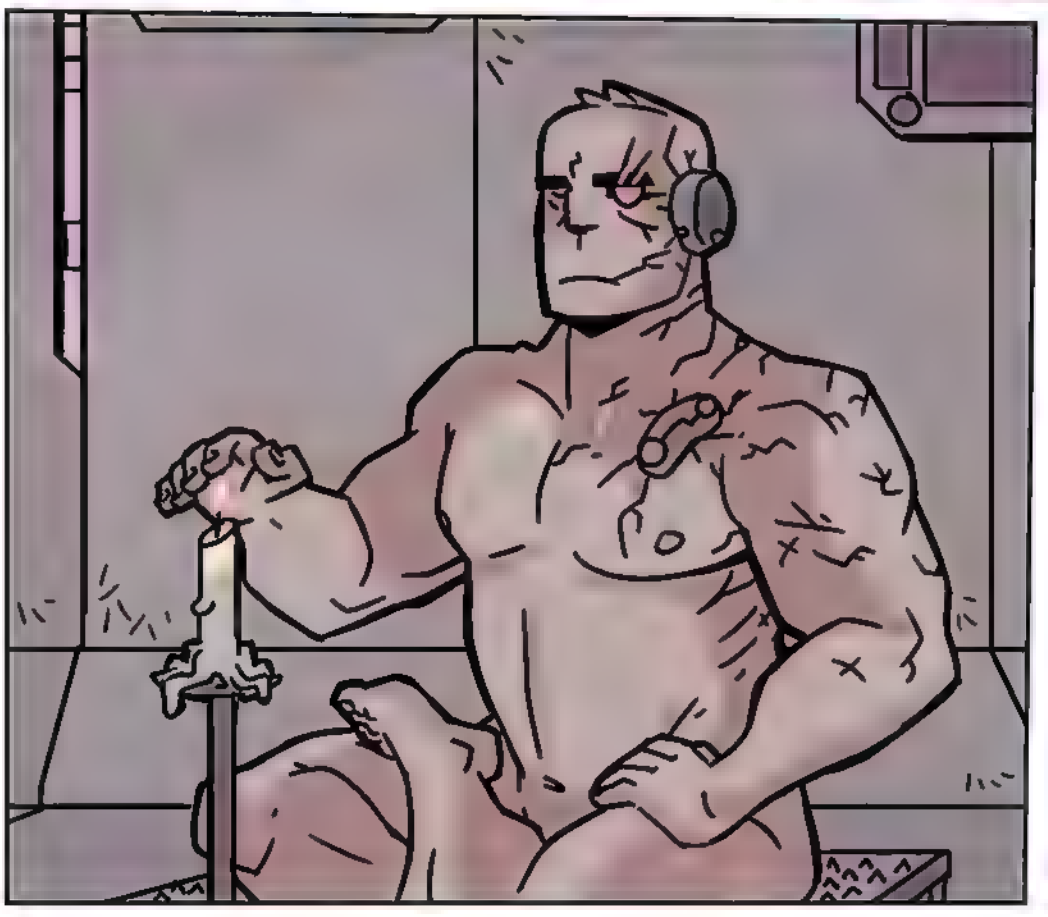
DAYS.

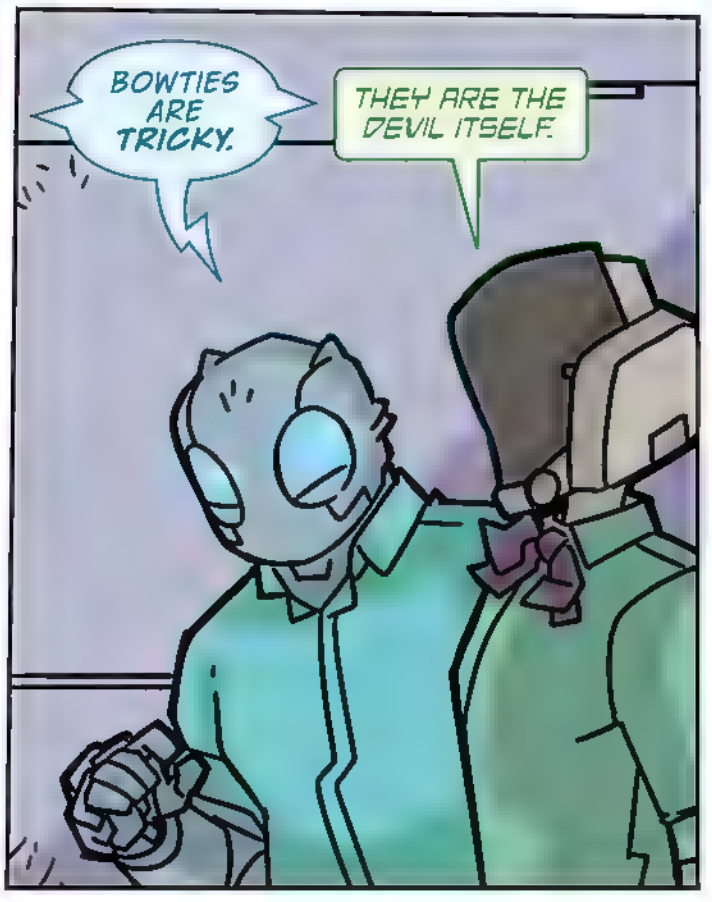
NEVER REALIZED WE HAD SO MANY **VENTS.**

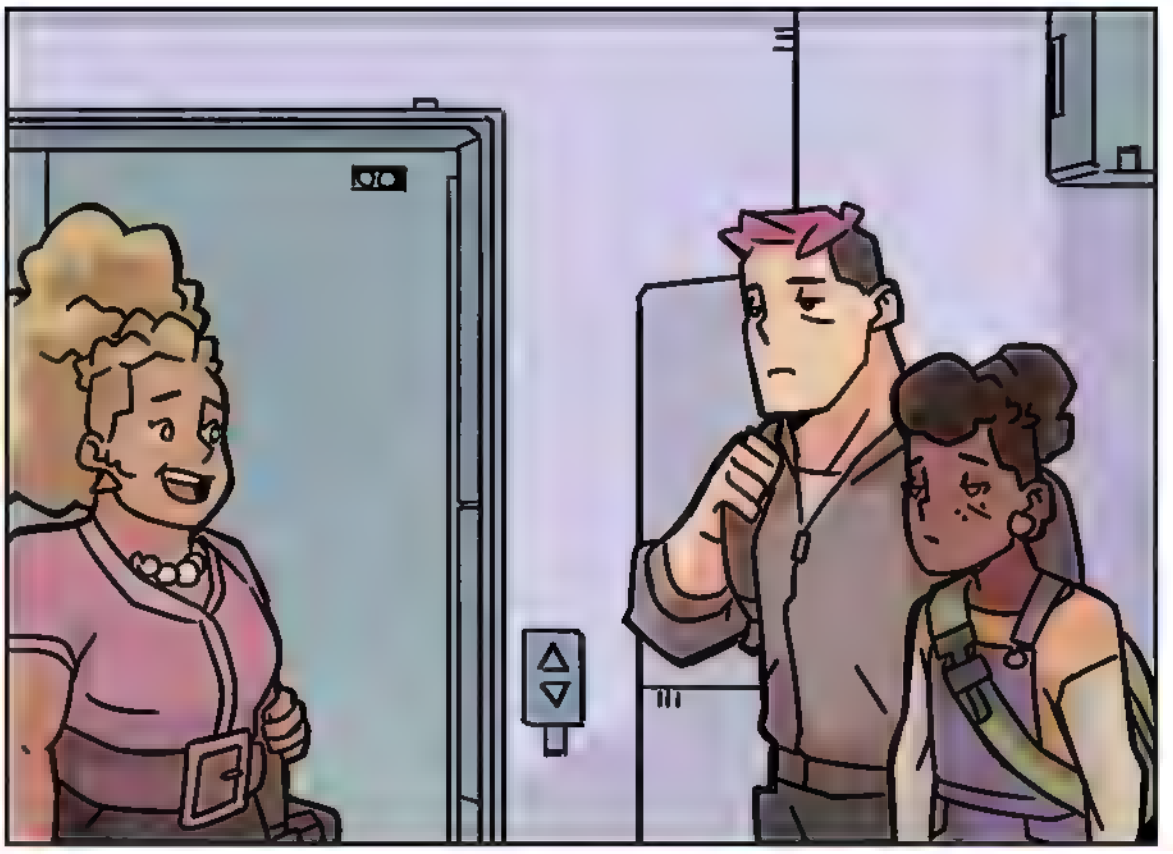

THE NEXT MORNING...

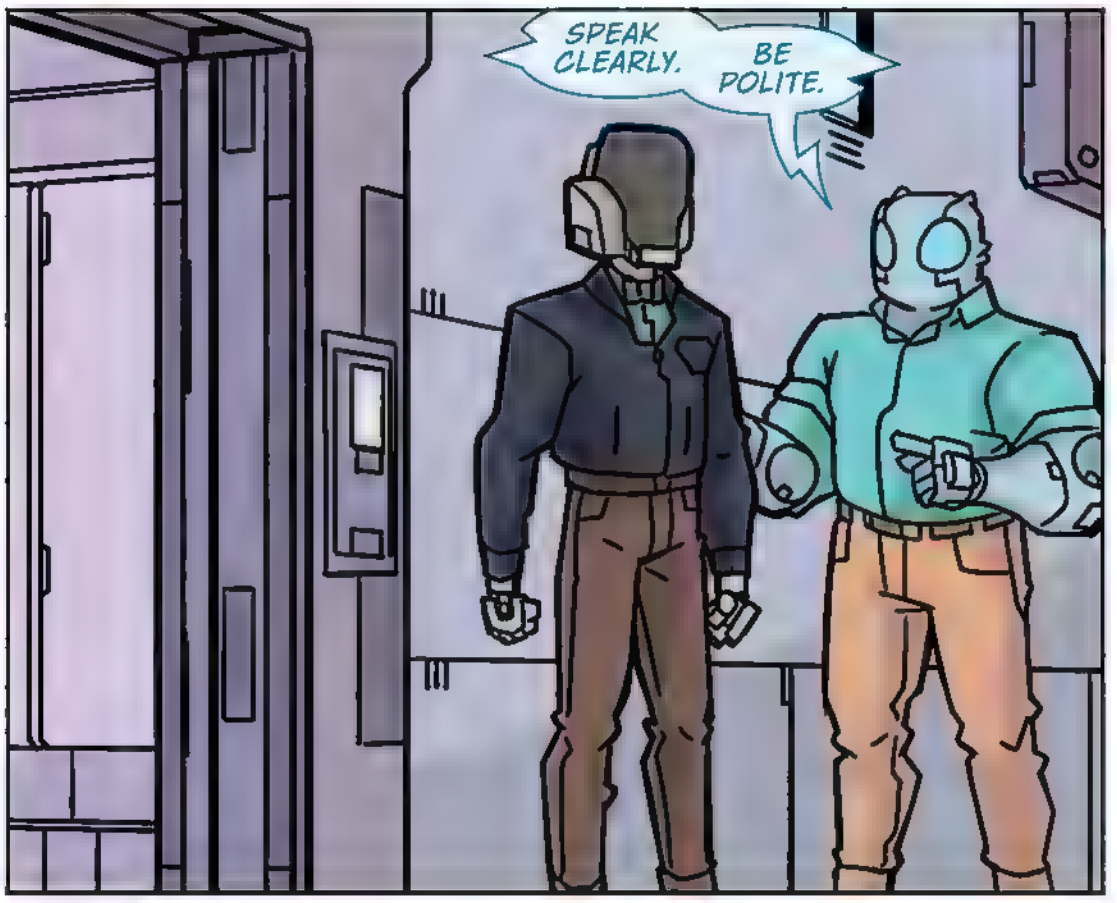







BOWTIES ARE TRICKY.
THEY ARE THE DEVIL ITSELF.




SPEAK CLEARLY.
BE POLITE.

KNOCK KNOCK

HERE WE GO.

COME IN!

GOOD MORNING.

MY NAME IS ALAN.

NICE TO MEET YOU, ALAN. I'M MARGO!

HEY, ALAN. I'M BEN.

OLIVIA.

IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.

I HOPE WE CAN BECOME FRIENDS.

HELL YEAH, WE WILL!

HELL YEAH.

HOW'S HE DOING?

OH, FOLEY. I THOUGHT YOU WERE IN THERE ***ALREADY.***

FIGURED THEY SHOULD MEET ***WITHOUT*** THE BIG, MEAN TEACHER ***LOOMING*** OVER THEM.

SOUNDS LIKE IT'S GOING ***WELL.***

SO ***FAR, SO GOOD.***

I JUST HOPE WE'RE ***READY.***

PROBABLY ***NOT.***

BUT IF WE ONLY DID STUFF WHEN WE WERE ***READY,*** WE'D NEVER GET OUT OF ***BED*** IN THE MORNING.

YOU SEEM TO BE TAKING IT WELL.

WHAT, ALAN?

YEAH. ***VIK'S*** CHECKED OUT, ***JENKINS*** WANTS TO USE HIM IN THE VAMPIRE WAR, AND ***LANG*** THINKS HE'LL KILL EVERYONE.

ALAN'S A BIG BUNDLE OF ***UNCERTAINTY.***

SO THEY'RE COPING WITH THAT IN THEIR ***OWN*** WAYS.

BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY, I JUST THINK YOU'RE ***RIGHT.***

WE HAVE AN ***OBLIGATION*** TO TREAT HIM WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT HE ***DESERVES.***

CHECK OUT THE *ROBUTT* ON ALAN!

SPWUH!

HELLO, MS. FOLEY. MY NAME IS ALAN.

NO, NO, NOOOO!

IT'S *OKAY.*

CAN'T SWOOP IN *EVERY* TIME.

EVERY DUCKLING'S GOT TO LEARN TO FLY ON ITS *OWN.*

IT WAS *EDUCATIONAL!*

THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT *BETTER!*

ALAN'S *CUTTING* EDGE ENGINEERING.

MY BODY IS A TESTAMENT TO BOTH FORM AND FUNCTION.

SEE?

LET'S JUST GET STARTED. *OKAY?*

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, THE CHANCES OF US RUNNING INTO VAMPIRES *THIS* TIME IS *BASICALLY* ZERO.

IT WAS BASICALLY ZERO *LAST* TIME, TOO.

RIGHT, SO *THAT* MEANS IT'S EVEN *MORE* ZERO THAN BEFORE.

DID THEY NOT *OFFER* STATISTICS AT YOUR UNIVERSITY, OR...?

WE DON'T NEED TO FOCUS ON THINGS LIKE TEST SCORES OR *GRADES* OR WHO DID *EXTRA CREDIT* INVOLVING A *DIORAMA.*

YOU'RE *JOKING,* RIGHT?

WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS I *PASSED.*

I MEAN WHAT WOULD IT BE A DIORAMA *OF?*

SORRY, CAN'T HEAR YOU, SO BUSY PACKING.

SHOULD WE *MEET* HIM BEFORE WE GO?

MAYBE?

YEAH.

NO?

PROBABLY.

SHOULD WE SAY SOMETHING TO *ROBO?*

LET'S JUST *DO* OUR VACATION, HAVE A GOOD TIME *OR ELSE,* AND DEAL WITH EVERYTHING *LATER.*

YEAH, MAYBE YOU'RE ***RIGHT.***

WE'VE BEEN DOING THE HEAVY LIFTING FOR ***YEARS.***

IT'S TIME TO LET SOMEONE ***ELSE*** WORRY.

JUST FOR A ***LITTLE*** WHILE.

EXACTLY.

WE'RE ON ***ORDERS*** TO TAKE A VACATION, THE CAR'S ***PACKED,*** NOTHING BUT A ***FIRE*** CAN STOP US NOW!

FWAM

IT'S "STOP, DROP, AND ROLL"!

NOT "STOP, DROP OUT THE ***WINDOW,*** AND ROLL"!

HELLO. MY NAME IS ALAN.

ORDINARILY I'M NOT ON FIRE.

I MEANT, LIKE, A ***BIG*** FIRE.

THE END

What's next for ATOMIC ROBO

First up, we'll have special deals for Black Friday and beyond! Check back *this Friday* for all the details. PLUS look for NEW COMICS starting *next week!*

Oh, and Alan finally got good at catch.